桜あげは
Agehа Sakura

レジーナブックス
Regina

ある日、ボリコ子悪役令嬢になりまして。

アルファポリス

登場人物紹介
Beatrix
トライアの護衛。
凛々しい男装の麗人。
Snape
トパージェリア国の第二王子。
ベアトリクスに
しょっちゅう叱られている。
Frau
本来の乙女ゲームのヒロイン。
ゲームの優しい印象とは
全然違っていて……？
Raiga
ロイスの従兄弟。
無愛想な俺様だけど、
実は面倒見がいい。
Kai
メイの双子の弟。
無口で表情に乏しい。
Mei
ライガの従者。
健気で愛らしい美少女。
Royce
ガーネット国の王子。
賢く穏やかな美少年。
自分に自信が持てず悩んでいる。
Achille
カミーユの幼馴染で、
ロイスの腹心。
やや計算高いが、カミーユには
掛け値なしに優しい。
Camille
ゲームにおける悪役侯爵令嬢だが、
今の中身は元女子高生の愛美。
敬愛するロイスを護るため
魔法を極めようとする魔法オタク。

Translator Notes

Burikko refers to a girl who likes to act all cutesy or innocent, usually adult women who fawn on men affectedly and act like little girls. Additionally, it can occasionally refer to a girl who fakes being cute, sweet, innocent and nice, but is actually a bitch. The use of it in this series refers to the more popular usage (it's just that the girl is coincidentally, also a bitch).
(There is no satisfactory English equivalent, and I don't believe in hamfisting things just to seem like a 'better translator'. And obviously people have been doing this for ages, otherwise we wouldn't have the word 'sushi' or 'keiretsu' or 'ninja' in English. They'd just be 'vinegared rice rolls' and 'Japonic Cartels' and 'Sengoku mercenary agents' or something, so you can get off your slightly large-ish pony.)

Maiden Game → (乙女ゲーム)Otome Game

Will assume you know about adv/otomege/eroge in regards to terms like 'route', 'capture', 'event' etc.

Incidentally, tl-ing most incidences of 'capture target' as 'love interest' for simplicity (and due to greater ubiquity of 攻略対象 in JP adv lingo).

Finally, you should know by now if you've been reading manga and the like, but Japanese people have this concept of 'four people of power or influence', described as the 'Four Heavenly Kings', a reference to the four guardian deities of the Buddhist faith. [Wikipedia]

Author's Memo (Otomege)

Otomege (Otome game)

An otome game is a generic name for games whose contents primarily involve interacting with and romancing male characters through a female protagonist.

Countries

Garnet Nation:

The country that is the most magically developed (is the country of the protagonist) and has a European-ish feel

Topageria Nation:

A nation prospering in commerce. Is a rich country (and the neighbouring country) and has an Arabian-ish feel [tl: may or may not just be Topaz and Algeria smooshed together]

School [In the setting of the game]

Garnet Nation – Royal Capital Magic School, High School Section

・Has three grades (and an associated university) and there is an entrance exam held every three years

・Is the top magic school in the world

・As long as they are over sixteen years old, anybody is qualified to take the exam

・The uniform is free dress

Factions [In the setting of the game]

Four classes are fighting within the academy (each class has thirty people each)
The students of each class have certain characteristics

・Hearts – The royalty and nobles of the Garnet Nation (Incumbent King Faction)

・Diamonds – Foreigners, and the wealthy

・Clovers – Commoners

・Spades – The royalty and nobles of the Garnet Nation (Anti-King Faction)

Each faction has people of influence [In the setting of the game]

・K (King) – The highest ranked in the class (male) – love interests

・Q (Queen) – The highest ranked in the class (female) – rivals

・J (Jack) – The king's aid (male) – friendship route characters

Heroine's ability [In the setting of the game]

A massive mana lays dormant in the body of the Heroine
She healed an animal on the verge of death
…or more like, she brought it back from the dead.
The story goes that the head of the academy was talking past, and scouted her

Each romance route [In the setting of the game]

Heart K

The rival girl hindered the heroine, but it was revealed and her position was taken. After that, the rival was socially half-killed, and lived avoiding attention
The Heart K becomes king, and the heroine queen

Diamond K

The rival girl hindered the heroine, but it was revealed, and she was exiled from the country (as a pretext for forcing her into a political marriage)
The Garnet Nation started a war because it desired the heroine's power, but the Diamond K tried his best, and Topageria won.

Clover K

The rival girl hindered the heroine, but it was revealed, and the Clover K told her never to appear before his eyes again.
The Garnet Nation aimed for the heroine because it wanted her power, but three years later, there was a revolution, and the monarchy collapsed. The leader of the revolution was the Clover K.

Spade K

The rival girl hindered the heroine, but it was revealed, and she was dismissed. After that, there was no further news of her.
The Garnet Nation's Incumbent King Faction aimed for the heroine because it wanted her power, but through a coup d'etat, the administration changed. (The Anti-King Faction held the real power)

Each friendship route [In the setting of the game]

Heart J

He becomes a friend at work when they both work for the king at the castle.

Diamond J

They mingle with each other during a student exchange in Topageria.
In the future, he works as a doctor in the Topagerian royal palace.

Clover J

Heroine becomes a good friend, who watches over them at work to make sure they don't do anything crazy

Spades J

They become a good conversation partner.
Reconciliation with his sister, a rival. They become tea drinking buddies.

Character Introduction

Protagonist

Frau Monier

[Game Setting]

・『Personality』: A cheerful and kind-hearted protagonist

・『Status』: Commoner

・『Appearance』: Ordinary appearance

Cinnamon coloured, wavy, medium length hair and olive coloured eyes

・『Clothing』: Commoner's clothing

Love Interests

Royce Garnet (17)

K of Hearts

[Game Setting] (changes in reality)

・『Personality』: A stereotypical prince

Falls in love with the heroine who softens his complexes towards his father

・『Status』: First prince

・『Appearance』: Blonde hair, blue eyes, tall and slender

・『Clothing』: Prince styled (European style), white

Raiger Transbaal (17)

K of Spades

[Game Setting] (changes in reality)

・『Personality』: Heartless (because he was continuously told to win against Royce since he was young)

Becomes drawn to the heroine's kindness

・『Status』: son of the Garnet Nation's king's younger brother, Royce's cousin

・『Appearance』: silver hair, blue eyes, tall and slenderly muscled

・『Clothing』: prince styled (European style), black

Tria Topageria (18)

K of Diamonds

[Game Setting] (changes in reality)

・『Personality』: A smooth talking womaniser, he wants to be ranked higher than the first prince through some achievements in the school. After being warned by the heroine about thinking like a stereotypical royal, he falls in love with her.

・『Status』: The second prince of the neighbouring Topageria

・『Appearance』: Copper coloured hair, golden eyes, a little built

・『Clothing』: Prince styled (Arabian style)

Asagi Raizel (17)

K of Clovers

[Game Setting] (changes in reality)

・『Personality』: Hot blooded. Was interested in the heroine to begin with.

Is thinking about proposing to the heroine after graduating.

・『Status』: A childhood friend of the heroine who lived near her

・『Appearance』: Red hair, black eyes, slenderly muscled

・『Clothing』: Light clothing popular in the capital

Friendship Route

Achille Jade (17)
J of Hearts

[Game Setting] (changes in reality)
・『Personality』: Sociable, harmless to everyone but his natural enemy, the Q of Hearts
・『Status』: Son of a viscount (illegitimate son), and the aid of the K of Hearts
・『Appearance』: Caramel brown hair, cobalt blue eyes, small build and slender
・『Clothing』: Noble styled (European style)

Kai Zakro (16)
J of Spades

[Game Setting] (changes in reality)
・『Personality』: Mysterious, adores K of Spades
Q of Spades' younger twin brother
・『Status』: K of Spades' subordinate
・『Appearance』: Navy blue short hair, yellow eyes, dark brown skin
・『Clothing』: Butler outfit

Galuf Sharohm (17)
J of Clovers

[Game Setting] (changes in reality)
・『Personality』: Wild
・『Status』: Son of a mafia boss
・『Appearance』: Violet hair, and long, narrow grey eyes
・『Clothing』: Clothes with a rough feel

Fior Cintron (19)
J of Diamonds

[Game Setting] (changes in reality)
・『Personality』: Gentleman, older brother type
・『Status』: Son of a powerful merchant
・『Appearance』: Orange hair, khaki green eyes, tall
・『Clothing』: Clothes of a wealthy person (Arabian style)

Rivals

<Game Setting>
Camille Rhodolite (17)
Q of Hearts

・『Personality』: A can't-take-a-hint burikko type rival. Likes the King of Hearts (romantically)
・『Status』: Daughter of a marquis
・『Appearance』: Pink hair (twin tails), raspberry coloured eyes, pink lips, a fair skinned loli-type bishoujo
・『Clothing』: Goth loli fashion

<In the original world>
Aizawa Manami (16) ♀
A high school girl

・『Personality』: No matter what you made her do, she was fairly good/not bad at it (she couldn't go beyond this), and she was happy-go-lucky
A fan of the King of Hearts in the game
・『Status』: Part of the go home club, and was around the upper-middle of the class
Her father is a salaryman, and her mother is a housewife
・『Appearance』: Fairly attractive/not bad looking (not somebody attractive beyond reach, somebody an average person could easily confess to)
・『Clothing』: The natural type (she pretends to be the neat and clean type)

Mei Zakro (16)
Q of Spades

[Game Setting] (changes in reality)
・『Personality』: Mysterious, adores K of Spades
・『Status』: K of Spades' subordinate
・『Appearance』: Navy blue short hair, yellow eyes, dark brown skin
・『Clothing』: Maid outfit

Beatrix Tapas (17)
Q of Diamonds

[Game Setting] (changes in reality)
・『Personality』: An unyielding, stereotypical ojousama
・『Status』: Daughter of Topagerian count
・『Appearance』: Long black hair, orange coloured eyes, bright red lips
・『Clothing』: Gorgeous and flamboyant dress (primary colours)

Aurelia Trèfle (17)
Q of Clovers

[Game Setting] (changes in reality)
・『Personality』: Docile but vicious and sly
・『Status』: Commoner, doctor's daughter
・『Appearance』: Braided black hair
・『Clothing』: Simple clothing

3 Years Old – Q of Hearts

"You know… because of you, I got dumped by Makoto-kun. Mind not getting ahead of yourself?"

There, stood an emotional schoolgirl, spitting out abuse at me, and I, who was standing there dumbfounded.
A few other students who were walking past turned this way to see what was going on… But they probably realised it was something bothersome. Like that, they pretended nothing was going on and walked away.
Tsk… Cold bastards.

Right now I'm at school, standing at the landing of an emergency staircase, being cornered by a gyaru-type girl with flashy make-up from the class next door.

"I'm not used to this kind of love conflict, you know."

Right now I'm at an overwhelming disadvantage of 1 vs 6, and have nowhere to escape to.
Because of the fake lashes and double-eyelid tape she was wearing, the eyes of the schoolgirl in question had swollen up to three times the size they were during the entrance ceremony. It's super intense.

By the way, I'm not a gyaru.
I'm the neat and tidy type… at least I pretend to be, and I'm camouflaged as a fairly attractive school girl… but, inside I'm actually just an otaku girl with otome games as my hobby.

Otome games are romance games aimed towards females.
They're games where the female protagonist, through various choices throughout the game, fall in love with various ikemen… Honestly, as long as I'm playing the part of a schoolgirl with a reasonably fulfilling life, it's a hobby that I can't tell anyone about.
That's why I made up this character I play at school, the type that goes "I don't play games or the like. I enjoy going with my friends to karaoke or shopping." If I seem like a hikikomori girl, various things will become difficult as long as I'm going to school after all.

Comparatively speaking, I'm quite good with dealing with school.
I hide my true self as an otome game otaku, and even if I'm not part of the gyaru group that's ranked high in the school, I'm part of a group that has more influence than average in my class.
I was maintaining a neutral position with the girls standing before my eyes, and was supposed to be on fairly good terms with them, and I was thinking that things were going quite well…

————Up until today.

“It’s a misunderstanding, I said… I don’t know what you’re talking about. Even though I’ve almost never even spoken to this Makoto person…”

Honestly, why’d it turn into this…?
There’s too much I don’t understand, so I let out a sigh. There’s nothing more difficult to get through to than an emotional person who’s snapped.
She’s crying and lashing out in anger. I wonder if it’d be a good idea to let her know, “Your mascara and eyeliner are coming off, and you’re starting to look like a Jiangshi.”

This all began with that Makoto-kun or whatever’s remark.
Makoto-kun is a fairly popular, sporty boy in my class.
He was the boyfriend of the girl standing in front of me, but apparently, the other day he one-sidedly broke things off with her.
And he left some extremely bothersome words.

“I’ve, fallen in love with Aizawa-san…”

By the way, Aizawa is my name. It’s fine even if you don’t remember it though.
Because of those last words of his, right now I’m having a terrible time being magnificently cornered by these girls who have misunderstood.

Of course I don’t seduce other people’s boyfriends, and I don’t have any memory of being confessed to by him either.
On the contrary, I’ve hardly even spoken to him in class! I can say this for sure! I’m innocent!
But then why do I have to be criticised like this? It’s incredibly unreasonable.
Oi Makoto, explain things to them right this instant!

“Ahh, it’d be nice if I could just summon him with magic, huh…”

If I could, everything would turn out just fine! …My sense of reality would be pretty damaged though.
Meanwhile, the girl is still yelling on and on, with no sign of growing tired. Can’t you guys just leave already?

“Are you listening? Break up with Makoto-kun this instant! And don’t come near him again!”

It seems that she’s still continuing with her misunderstanding.

“Um, like I said, we’re not dating. I’ve never talked to him properly, so I really think this is some mistake.”

To begin with, it’s a mystery as to why my name came out of his mouth anyway.
Honestly, my contact with the Makoto-kun in question is limited to eye contact once in a while, and I really haven’t interacted with him at all.

“Stop lying-!”

Unfortunately my words weren’t reaching the frenzied girl.

In a fit of anger, the girl ended up shoving me. Her hands hit me perfectly in the stomach.

“Ah-…!”

When I realised that things were bad, my body was already hanging in the air. As I stumbled backwards, I lost my footing on the stairs.

————I’m falling————

The girl who pushed me, widened her eyes in shock. Even if she was condemning me, she probably didn’t plan on pushing me down the stairs, huh…
I wonder if she’ll be arrested for assault.
Even though it was the instant I was falling down the stairs, the things before my eyes were moving extremely slowly…
Without sensing the danger of the situation, my mind stayed carefree and continued to think normally.

※

Bang!!

“Uwahh!”

A shock hit my body.
However, it wasn’t as painful as I had prepared myself for.
Because I hit myself against something soft, things ended without pain.
What’s going on? There’s something fluffy under my back.

“Geez, Camille[1]-sama. I’ve told you countless times that you can’t jump on the bed…”

“Who are you…?”

Before my eyes stood an obasan with a ‘full’ build wearing a maid outfit.
She’s probably in her fifties, huh… Honestly, I think it’s pushing it for her to cosplay a maid at that age. If my mother wore something like that, I’d hate it.

※

“Camille-sama! This is terrible! I thought it was some sort of joke, but have you truly lost your memories? That’s why I asked you time and time again not to do something so dangerous!”

An unknown room, furniture and world.
It seems I dived onto this bed I've never seen before. It's a bed that looks somewhat high class.
I should have fallen from the emergency stairs in my school, but… Why? The surroundings have changed.
…In the first place, where is this? There are too many questions, so I'm sitting still here.

"Aahh! The master[/Danna-sama] will be here shortly, okay…!?"

The plump maid-outfit obasan paced around me nervously.
…This seems like something I'd see in a dream.

No, this is a dream. There's no mistake. Or rather, please let it be a dream.

When there are people around more panicked than yourself, you calm down quite a bit.
Once I wake up from this dream, I'll be on a bed in my house, or in the infirmary.
I mean, there's no way any of this is possible.

"Camille."

The door suddenly opened, and a man I've never seen before quietly entered.
He's wearing odd clothing, like a European noble from the middle ages. He might be one of the maid obasan's cosplay buddies…

"Are you all right? Do you know who I am?"

His appearance looked a little cold, but he was young and handsome. His face is exactly my type.
He's probably… a young adult, in the first half of his twenties, so there's probably no problem with dating him. Were his head not pink, that is.
Whether a miniskirt-maid-obasan, or this pink haired man, nobody decent comes out in my dreams, huh.
That in itself might be proof that I'm an otaku.

I answered the pink man.

"I don't… I mean, this is our first meeting, right?"

There's definitely no way I'd forget such a high impact person.

"Ahh…"

The pink man held his head in his arms and squatted. The obasan hurried to his side in a panic.

“Are you all right? Marquis-sama!”

“There’s no way I’d be all right! For my daughter to have lost her memories… All I did was work and I neglected my daughter…”

The two of them stayed crouched like that for a while. …What on earth is going on?

※

My name is Camille Rhodolite.
I’m the eldest daughter of the Rhodolite Marquis family, and shockingly, I’m three! … Or so I was told.
Speaking of which, my arms and legs have been abnormally small, and my clothes are fluttery children’s clothing too.
Even though I’m a sketchy person, for something that came out in my dream, the craftmanship of this clothing sure is detailed, huh…

At any rate, both Camille and Rhodolite are names I’ve heard somewhere before. As for just where I’ve heard them, I can’t remember at all.

“And I am your father, Charles[2] Rhodolite.”

“I am the head maid of this residence, Aimée[2] Afriat!”

What I understand from all this is that the maid obasan is a very energetic person.

It seems that this is the residence of Marquis Rhodolite, in other words, the residence of the pink headed man declaring himself as my father.
Because his wife passed away when Camille was born, it’s a motherless family.

“I showed her to the doctor too, but it seems that besides the loss in memory, she’s very healthy… It’d be nice if by some chance she remembered everything, but…”

I think that might be impossible. I had no memories of living as Camille to begin with, after all.

“Right now is rest time, Camille-sama. Please sleep on the bed.”

Then I’ll do so without reserve. And after that, everything will be back to normal once I wake up.
Ahh, but wow. That sure was a dream with impact.

※

…Odd.

For the dream to be continuing even after I wake up… When I woke up the next day, I was still in that room.
I woke up on the bed I mentioned earlier, and I got up and was about to check the surroundings when the door opened before I could.

“Ahh, Camille-sama. Have you memories not returned?”

“…It looks like it.”

My body remains that of a three year old, and my surroundings are still a place I don’t know. It might just be because I’m little, but I feel like this house is really big.
Did I fall into a coma because of the shock in the fall, and that’s why I can’t wake up from this dream?
I still have my life to live after I wake up, so if possible I hope this ends with just a minor injury.

“Well, can’t be helped.”

Even if I struggle about, it’s not like I’ll be able to wake up from the dream. Last night before I went to sleep, I tried kicking and squirming so I can declare this with proof. That! Which is impossible, remaaaains impossible.
I’ve decided to enjoy this dream. I mean, I finally became something as interesting as the young daughter of a rich marquis family after all.
I’m a person who’s good at going with the flow.

“The pink-… I mean, where is father[/Otousama]?”

When I looked in the mirror yesterday, I found to my shock that, like my pink father, I had the same hair colour as well.
I can no longer ignore my own shortcomings and continue calling him the pink man.

“Marquis-sama is currently doing his job.”

“…What is father[/Otousama]’s job?”

“The Marquis-sama is a high ranking magician at the castle. Each day he maintains the safety of the country.”

I don’t really get it, but it sounds like a pretty amazing job! I’m slightly re-examining my views of pink dad.
And there’s magic in this world? How cool!

“Magic? How nice. I wanna do it too!”

When I was little, I admired a certain film’s wizard protagonist.

It was my dream to go to a school of witchcraft and wizardry, but even when I entered high school, I didn’t get an invitation from the magic school in question.

Since there was no other choice, I entered a public school in the neighbourhood. I just lived by camouflaging and dealing with my surroundings, but I'm aware that I'm actually a pretty embarassing girl.
But it's fine, this is a dream after all. Let me do as I please!

"…Hahh, once Marquis-sama returns, let us discuss it with him… But honestly, Camille-sama, you sure have changed, haven't you…?"

There a rumour going around Aimée and the other servants that since I hit my head yesterday, I've become smarter. Inside I'm a high school girl, so that's a given. I'm being praised a lot just because I stopped jumping on the bed.

"Really?"

I'm a three year old child, so there should be leeway for a little change in personality like this.

More importantly, it's my dream, so there's no problem! Everything's fine!

But just when am I going to be able to wake up?
Aahh, there were heaps of things I still needed to do, though!
I still haven't cleared the otome game I stealthily bought two weeks ago!

Because I knew how to deal with high school life, I've been living while concealing the truth that I'm an otome game otaku.
∴(therefore), I basically never game outside of the room in my house. I can't take out my games to play on the train or at school, so the time I have to play is necessarily limited to the time I have after I'm back from school, and I'm not making much progress at all.
Not only that, to maintain my decent grades I spend half the time at home studying.
It's because all of my playthroughs have been done with the help of walkthrough sites in order to save time, following the guidance of my predecessors, that I've been able to maintain my gaming life.
The game I mentioned a little earlier that I've been playing recently is also one that I've been playing sporadically since it came out, and I've been progressing while reading the walkthroughs.

Mn… Hang on… This world is…

※

This place is, kinda, pretty similar to the world of that otome game, huh.
Mn, right. There was a pink person called Camille Rhodolite.
For the game to even appear in my dreams… I really do have some lingering attachments to it, huh. As expected of me.

『Carte à Jouer』 (←It means trump in French)

This was the title of the last otome game I played, and it was a game set in a world similar to this one.
In a magic academy where the four factions, Hearts, Diamonds, Clovers and Spades vied for power, a commoner heroine had romances with ikemen in the school, and it was a game about rising status in the world.

The love interests were the top members of the four great powers that went to the same school as the protagonist.
The men were nicknamed K(King), and the protagonist would eventually fall in love with a K from one of the four powers.
They were amongst the elite, and were people who had the best grades and highest social positions. As expected of an otome game. The love interests are all high spec.

The person whose form I'm currently taking, Camille Rhodolite, was one of the rivals who got in the protagonist's way, and was the antagonist that appeared during one of the romance events with the capture target from the Hearts faction (K of Hearts).
Four rival characters appear for each of the four powers.
By the way, amongst the players, the four rivals are known as the 'Evil Four Heavenly Kings'.
Camille's role was that of the heart faction's rival, and is popularly known as the Q(Queen) of Hearts.
Q is a term that refers to the various rival girls.
The Q of Hearts was a selfish, can't-take-a-hint burikko type rival character, and after she appeared during the K of Hearts route, she was an unmanageable person who would follow the K of Hearts around, and get in the way of the heroine's romance at every turn.

Of course, each faction's Q would get in the way of the romance with their faction's king, but amongst them Camille was a particularly infuriating woman. She was like a figure that personified all the annoying parts of a woman's stubbornness, combined.
I was a fan of the King of Hearts, so I found her extremely irritating.
Well, she was a villain so in the end she was destroyed socially, and I felt really refreshed though.

…Wai-…Right now I'm Camille, aren't I?
But the thought that I'll be ruined at this rate doesn't come to mind.
∴(Because) this is a dream.
There's no way, way~, that I'll fall into ruin~♪

Since I've come all the way to a country with magic, I'll do what I want! I've come all the way to a dream where I don't have to worry about how others see me, after all.
I wonder if the magic of this country has a game where you chase around a golden ball with wings. I'd be really, really be interested in playing it.

Notes

1. Camille (kah-mii-yyh)
2. Charles (sharl)
3. Aimée Afriat (eh-mehh ah-free-ah)

5 Years Old – Q of Hearts (Part 1)

"…How weeeeird~"

I turned five. In other words, two years have passed since then.
But despite that, I still haven't woken up from my dream.
Since it can't be helped, I've been continually enjoying and experiencing this world. At the end of the day, it's a place like the country of magic that I've longed for.
It's a dream, so no time will have passed when I wake up… right…?

Camille's father's, the Marquis Rhodolite's, love for magic has been growing more intense, and he's been working at his current job.
But because he's a genius, he pays no attention to things outside his interests(magic).
I can understand the feeling of being uninterested in what doesn't interest you, but… it's a situation where he really is neglecting the matters of his household.
It seems his daughter Camille had a lonely childhood.

Up until now he's been immersing himself in his beloved magic, and was a marquis who was completely ignoring his family and was unqualified as a father, but lately his daughter has started to show interest in magic, so he occasionally comes home.
Their parent-child relationship has been changing for the better… At least that's the rumour that's been whispered amongst the servants lately.

Now, when the marquis isn't busy with his job, he teaches magic to his daughter Camille.
It's one of the few times that the parent and child come into contact with each other.
As for things unrelated to magic, he's still the same as ever, though…
Rather than being indifferent to his daughter, it feels more like he doesn't know how he's supposed to deal with things outside of magic.
When he actually does teach magic, he's a very kind father. He's probably a clumsy person.
By the way, when he's busy with his jobs as the marquis, he even sends his subordinates to the estate to teach magic.
Despite being five, I'm receiving a gifted education.
Fortunately it seems that I've inherited my father's ability in magic.
As expected of my dream; the setting is really convenient.

Now then, today I'll be asking a question that I've been wondering about for a while now.

"Father[/Otousama], is there a magic for straddling a broom to fly, or a magic for riding a broom to fly, or a magic for hanging off a broom to fly?"

"It's all brooms, huh… There's magic to fly… but, why brooms?"

It seems that even the idea of flying on a broom doesn't exist in this world.

Speaking of which, even in games there's nothing but cool spells for attack and defence, huh. Is it a matter of appearance?

"Wouldn't flying on a broom be cool?"

"That's an amusing way of thinking, isn't it? …If you used a spell that made things float, you could probably do it… But… doesn't a broom look too shabby?"

My father answers even my foolish questions seriously, so I love him.

"I'm shocked by your growth in magic, Camille. As expected of my daughter."

At this rate, won't I be able to go to a magic school like the protagonist of that certain film?
●●●warts, I'm always ready for your invitation.

※

"Camille-sama, it's about time to get down."

In one corner of the marquis residence, father's subordinate Viscount Soleil[1] Jade, called out for me from below.
With long, light blue hair and a gentle demeanour, he's a man of about father's age.
With a kind looking face, and a slim figure, though it isn't as much as father, he's my type. Guhehe.

Soleil teaches me magic when father is busy, and acts as my private tutor(magic coach).
Right now I'm taking his class, and in the middle of flying above the estate on a broom.
Thanks to father and Soleil, I'm able to fly quite stably.
Even when I'm by myself, I straddle my broom and fly about the garden.
Once I went outside the estate, but father got angry at me super seriously.
I guess it can't be helped that as a five year old, my actions are limited, huh…

"Okay, I'm coming downnn!"

The broom slowly descended, and I landed on the ground.

"Still, you've really been thinking, haven't you? Using a broom as a intermediary makes it easy to handle, and most importantly, you can fly quickly while stable, huh."

The one who came up with it wasn't me though~

For a five year old, I'm picking up magic exceptionally quickly.
Besides flying in the sky, I can create a light or fire, and I can blow leaves with wind.
If I put these to use, it feels like I can do even more. It's incredibly interesting.

Soleil who was looking at the little me with eyes narrowed in affection has a son about my age.

“He’s a really intelligent kid, you know?” he always brags.

He’s a stupidly doting parent, but the way he is is very heartwarming.

“Is he that cute a kid? It sounds like he’d be a pleasure to meet~”

He’s probably like Soleil, huh~

“It’d be nice if I could show him to you. I’ll ask Marquis-sama.”

※

Soleil who had taken my half lip service “It sounds like he’d be a pleasure to meet~” seriously, had decided together with my father to let their children meet.
And so, today I’m at their workplace… I came to the royal castle.

I found out after I asked father about it later, but Soleil’s second son who I’m meeting today is actually the child of his mistress.
Geez, Soleil. Even though you have such a harmless looking face, you sure get busy, huh!
Right now he’s taken custody of that son from the mistress, and is raising him at his house though.
Since it’s Soleil, I think it’ll be fine, but it often happens that the son of a mistress feels ashamed, something like a template in stories, huh? I’m a little worried about that kid.

If I remember correctly, there was a character like that in the game too, huh~
A character who used his past of being oppressed as the son of a mistress, as mental fuel to climb up in the world, and was attending the same school as the heroine, as the right hand man of one of the love interests.
In the game, the heroine accepted that character’s past, and through consolation, a friendship budded between the two of them.
And then following the orders of the K of Hearts, he was the ringleader behind annihilating the Q of Hearts(right now, me).
It was horrible treatment, enough that you could say to him, “You didn’t have to go that far.”
The players who enjoyed the game through the heroine’s perspective were all cheering “Nicely done!” though…

But well, that has nothing, nothing~, to do with me, though~♪ …Probably.
I’ll probably wake up from this dream before that.

I entered the break room that my father uses during work.
A job being a job, the workplace isn’t somewhere a child can just wander about

randomly.
Mn, I understand! I won't do something so childish! I have the intellect of an adult, after all! (Even if my brains are chu2)

But I'm curious about what kind of job involves magic…
When I stealthily peeked outside the room, I saw some people who looked like magicians working at the castle.
Everyone's walking around busily, but unfortunately they don't seem to be using magic.
Perhaps it's a magician's uniform, but everybody is wearing a sleeveless robe thing.
The colours are varied, and at a glance, there seem to be three types; black, red and blue.

I'm curious about the clothing too, but what I'm even more curious about is that they have something like a tattoo running from their face to their arms.
In fact, my father the marquis has tattoos on his arm and back as well.
I accidentally saw them when he was changing. Let me just say that I was definitely not peeking!
At that time, I was like, 'whoa, you sure can't judge people by their looks'… and backed away a little, but perhaps a magician is an occupation that requires tattoos. I'll ask him next time!

And while all this was happening, father and Soleil brought a small boy into the room.
He has caramel brown hair and cobalt blue eyes, and is a bishounen with an insanely beautiful face. His kind features are a little bit similar to Soleil.
He's dressed in navy blue clothes for going out, in the style of a young noble boy, and it suits him quite well.
And my clothes are similar; grape-coloured going out clothes for the daughter of a rich family[/an ojousama].
Reflecting my tastes, it's a design with not too many frills, and is neat and cut knee-length.

Soleil pushed the boy forward.

"This is my son, Achille[2], the same age as you, Camille-sama."

The boy met eyes with me and smiled.
But it seems that it wasn't a smile from the heart.
It kind of feels like the kid in front of me is interested in my reaction. Even though he's a little brat, he's evaluating me? How cheeky…

"It is nice to meet you, Camille-sama. My name is Achille Jade."

Ahh… I know those eyes…
They're the eyes of a person who behaves with confidence that he has the good will of females.
Outrageously, an arrogance, of not believing there to be the slightest chance that a person of the opposite sex would hate him, is just barely hidden.

And right now he's dealing with me in a way that he's calculated to be the most attractive to me.
A little five year old girl with no resistance would probably be bewitched.
However, I can see through him. After all, there were men like this around me in the world outside of this dream as well.

Handsome men who were not only aware of their own facial skills while approaching you full of confidence, but egocentric as well.
They'd thoughtlessly call out to me, who was a not bad looking girl, and on top of that, treated me like a sitting duck; one in a line of convenient women who they could use to keep up their reputation.
For some reason I would often get approached condescendingly by flashy-looking, handsome boys.
But because I'm that on the inside, let me state that if they made me accompany them, I'd have suffered quite a bit.
To begin with, the moment they tried to pick me up as a candidate for casually playing around with, it was already compleeetely out of the question.
I'll refrain from such fruitless relationships.

But still, this Achille boy… For him to be able to use his appearance to maximum effectiveness as a kid… He's not going to grow up to be a decent adult you know!
However, I won't be done in by the likes of a kid. Don't look down on not-bad-looking high school girls!
Hmph!
And so, I got worked up about a five year old child.
Of course, I didn't say any of this aloud.
Well, he's still a five year old child, and the fact that he's been seen through by the likes of a faker like me is kind of cute, though.

"It's nice to meet you. My name is Camille Rhodolite."

I pinched my skirt, and did a little curtsy.
However, I decided not to use the pretty face I have in this dream.
It's a bother, and to begin with, I can't do something so skilful.

"She's an extremely lovely girl[/personage], isn't she, father[/Otousama]?"

Achille looked up at Soleil and spoke. Soleil looked at his son fawningly.

"We're going out for work, so please play together in this room."

That's right. Today was a day that Soleil was working, to say nothing of father who holds a supervisory position here.
He should be busy today as well.
Father and Soleil left the room side by side. Only me and this precocious brat were left in the room…

※

Being left in the room with only Achille, I was troubled.
In these situations, what am I supposed to talk about? …Honestly speaking, I'm bad with children.
Perhaps because he noticed I was fidgeting, Achille called out to me.
What are you gunna do if you make a five year old child be considerate for you, Me!?

"I have heard from my father that you are skilled in magic, Camille-sama. That you have already progressed to intermediate magic, for example…"

Achille talked to me with that affected smile from before.
He's unnecessarily close, huh. As expected of a precocious brat.

"Just Camille is fine. I mean we are the same age for once, and I'm not going to kick up a fuss about your manners, so don't worry about it…"

It's a pain, so I asked to stop with the keigo.
I wonder if I'm acting unbefittingly for a lady.
But I don't wanna be stiff and formal with a kid, and it's just the two of us anyway, so it should be fine.

"I heard from Soleil that you're really smart, Achille. Do you like studying?"

Achille looked a little troubled, but seemingly accepting my proposal, he immediately changed to an informal tone.

"Yeah, I basically do nothing but study. I was told not to come out of my room too much, so…"

As expected, it seems that as the child of a mistress, he can't be too bold in doing what he wants.
Going out today might be an exception amongst exceptions.
If that's the case, I want him to be able to enjoy himself a little…

I suddenly caught eye of a few brooms for cleaning in the corner of the room, and my worthless head came up with a stupid idea.

"Since it's been so long since you've been allowed outside, wanna go all out and play?"

"Eh…?"

I straddled a broom, and beckoned for Achille to come over.
It's just the sky, so they probably won't blame us for anything, and even if they do find fault with me, we're both children so it'll probably end with just a light lecture.

Most importantly, it's boring to just stay still in this room.
It feels like my mental age is steadily being pulled down to this body's.

“Get on.”

I forced the bewildered Achille to sit behind me, and I kicked off the ground.
The broom lightly floated in the air, and moved towards the outside of the window. I could tell that Achille had caught his breath behind me.

The broom vigorously flew out the window. The speed is steadily increasing.

“Achille, hold onto the broom tightly!”

Unlike the marquis residence, the castle is wide so flying seems worthwhile.
You can see the Magician’s Building that my father works in below us. The Magician’s Building is something like a circular tower.
Behind the Magician’s Building, you can see lots of plants growing in the fields, and they seem to be growing medicinal herbs used for magic.

“Camille… Where are you planning on heading?”

Achille who had calmed down again called out to me.
Geez, it would have been nicer if he showed a more shocked expression. How uncute. And even though I told him to hold onto the broom, why are his arms wrapped around my waist?

“Mn~, I haven’t decided. For now, maybe we should fly a wide lap around the castle.”

“I see. Then let’s try going near where the important people live. If we come too close it feels like we’ll be targeted by the people guarding, so let’s fly a little distance away, okay?”

“That sounds interesting… But just where is it?”

“Isn’t it further in?”

We headed towards where the living quarters for the important people seemed to be.

Notes

1. Soleil (soh-lei-yyh)

2. Achille (ah-shil)

5 Years Old – Q of Hearts (Part 2)

After flying about for a while, we could see a beautiful garden.
Somehow there was this high class feeling about it, so the important people might be there.
I headed in the direction of the garden.
In the centre of the garden was a white fountain surrounded by roses in full bloom. Red, white, pink – flowers of beautiful colours were mixed together.

Suddenly, I felt like I heard a voice, so I looked down, and when I did, I saw the figure of a child about our age.
They were a small boy with beautiful blonde hair, and surrounding him were a group of boys dressed like nobles.
The boys surrounding him might be a little older.
But for a group of children playing together, things looked a little strange.

“Is that, bullying”

One of the children grabbed the small blonde boy by the collar, and the other boys started cackling.
It was a revolting scene.
Before long, the surrounding boys began to push the blonde child around.
…I can’t watch this.

“Will you save that boy?”

As though he was waiting for this timing, Achille whispered in my ear. I reflexively got goosebumps.
This kid aimed for my ear on purpose, didn’t he?
But I can’t object to his words. I’m anti-bullying!

“Is it okay to go down? Won’t I get you mixed up in it, Achille?”

“It’s fine, but? That blondie is probably a kid from the royal family… It might be a good chance for me to establish contact with him.”

What a mercenary child! I’ve misjudged him.
But now is not the time to be stunned at Achille. I have to save that child.

The blonde child accidentally fell on his butt.
At this rate, he might start getting hit or kicked.
As one of the children was about to try and mount him, I got in their way, still on the broom.

“Heyy! Stop thaat!”

The child who was trying to mount him got hit in the butt by the broom handle.
Because of the impact, the bully fell over.
He immediately got back up, red faced and rubbing his butt painfully.

“What the heck is with you!? Where’d you come from!?”

“That’s my line, you damned brat! Ganging up on a little kid to bully him. Don’t you feel embarrassed!?”

While I replied sharply, Achille helped the blonde child up.

“Shaddup! Stop meddling, you bitch!”

“Yeah! Yeah!”

One of the large kids near me turned my way and tried to hit me.

“Geh-”

Right now I’m a feeble little five year old. Close combat isn’t my thing. I immediately used magic to defend.
At my actions, the surrounding kids widened their eyes in surprise.
It seems that children who can use magic at my age are rare.

“Take thiiis!”

I tried to use some light offensive magic, but for some reason smoke came out of my hands and just disappeared. Did I fail?

“Oh?[/Are?] My magic won’t come out…”

“Except for those in security, nobody can use offensive class magic without permission here.”

The one who spoke was the blonde child. What the heck? That’s super inconvenient. Is it because it’s the castle?

“Camille, the broom!”

I came back to my senses at Achille’s voice.
While stopping the children with defensive magic, I straddled the broom. Right now the priority is to get away from here.
While urging the blonde child to get on the broom, Achille got on as well behind him.

“We’re ready!”

“Alright!”

With Achille's voice as the sign, I levitated the broom, and steadily rose at a fast speed.
The dumbfounded bullies gazed up vacantly. What stupid expressions. Serves you right.
While laughing, "Kekeke," I flew a lap above their heads to provoke them.

"Let's return to the Magician's Building… Father might have returned."

"Yeah."

I turned around, and headed back to the Magic Building.
But still, the broom has gotten slow. Three people are riding on it, so that's natural though.
It's like when the basket on your bicycle has a lot of drinks packed into it.

We could see the window of the Magic Building now. I'm glad that it wasn't too far. Having 3 people ride this is a little bit much…
It might be necessary to have more practice, and further improvements to the broom.
We unsteadily entered through the target window, and landed.

"Ahhh, I'm tired. That was heavy."

After returning the broom to where I found it, I collapsed on the sofa.
Achille was looking my way with an astonished expression, but I'm tired so it can't be helped.

"Are you okay?"

The blonde child peered in on my face. Uwahh, he's a bishounen too.
A bishounen with the sure-fire combo of blonde hair and green eyes, he's like a prince.

"Thank you for saving me, you two. I'm Royce Garnet, the first prince of this country."

"…Prince? Roiss?"

Royce Garnet he said? That moment, all the blood in my body boiled.
Royce-sama… ROYCE-SAMAAAAAAAAAA!?

Speaking frankly, I'm a huge fan of his.

He's one of the love interests in 『Carte à Jouer』, the future K of Hearts.
And he was the love interest character that I adored the most.

Royce's route was standard among standard routes, but while I was playing the game, my heart was struck countless times by his smile.
Royce who shouldered the pressure of being the first prince as he entered the Magic School…
He who held no confidence in anything was encouraged by the heroine, and before he

knew it, he had ended up with romantic feelings for her.
After overcoming numerous ordeals (obviously including the Q of Heart's interference), in the end the admirable two ended up married.
The commoner heroine, who despite being a commoner had hidden potential, in the end even became the queen of this country.
'She got the beloved prince, and even succeeded in rising in ranks!' in other words.

When I had a look at Achille, he was smirking.
A person of influence = royalty. Getting close to him means that Achille's goal was achieved. Good for you.
Speaking of which, just as I feared earlier, as expected, isn't Achille also a character from the game?
There was certainly a character with his upbringing in the game.

With Royce and Achille together, my memories are gradually becoming clearer.
Achille was something who had nothing but a friendship route, so I was beginning to forget him but…
As expected, he was a character that thoroughly crushed the Q of Hearts, and was the close aide of the K of Hearts, the J of Hearts! Scary-!

Aahh… Perhaps I'm headed down the same path as the original story.

No, this is a dream. A dream. …That I'll be socially exterminated is, impossible…
It's impossible, right…?
This world that's progressing just like the original story is getting scarier and scarier.

※

After that, we introduced ourselves to him, and chatted with Royce in the break room of the Magician's Building.
It's like a dream… No, it is a dream, though!

"You two really saved me. I got seen being pathetic though, haha…"

While being a little shy, Royce-sama thanked the two of us.
As expected of Royce-sama, even when he's very young he has this refinement about him.

"No, we just happened to be passing by, but I am glad that we were of use to you, Your Highness. What is most important is that you are safe."

Oooh, that smiling Achille has completely entered his sales mode.
Unlike Royce-sama, Achille is really an uncute kid.

"You don't need to be so formal, you know? Our age is close, and I'd be happy if we could get along from now on as well. Unfortunately there aren't many people in the castle that I'm close to, you see…"

After saying this, Royce-sama made a slightly sad expression. Even his sad expression is beautiful!
I didn't notice while I was playing the game, but did Royce-sama grow up in a pretty lonely environment?

"Royce-sama… In that case, I shall ask my father[/otousama] for permission and bring Achille again to play."

I can meet Royce-sama, and it gives Achille an excuse to leave the house too. A good idea, if I do say so myself.

"Really?"

His beautiful blue eyes narrowed, and Royce-sama happily took my hand.

"Of course! If my father allows, though."

"I'll have it arranged."

As expected of a prince! Even at a young age, his authority sure is effective, huh.
But if I can meet with Royce-sama, then I have no complaints.

"Camille, I've kept you waiting."

"Ah, Father[/Otousama]."

I ran over to greet my father who had just entered the break room.
Soleil came in as well, behind father.
Soleil saw Royce-sama who was sitting with us, and stiffened.

"Y-, Your Highness!?"

After that, Royce-sama spoke about everything that happened, and hearing that, I was ended up scolded by father.
Well, Royce-sama stopped him halfway, though… Surprisingly, Achille did too.
Soleil contacted the castle to let them know that the prince was here, and somebody immediately came for Royce-sama.

"Your Highness, it is good that you are safe."

A prim gentleman with the air of a butler appeared in front of the door.
His age might have been between forty and fifty. His monocle flashed in the light, and gave off the feeling of being a very adequate chamberlain.

"Henri, I've worried you haven't I? When I was surrounded by my cousin's group, these two saved me, you know?"

Henri nodded understandingly, and turned to look at our faces.

“Very good.”

What is? I don’t really get this Henri person.
After telling Achille and I to wait here, he left with father, Soleil and Royce-sama.

Left here, as expected I couldn’t comprehend what was going on, and stared towards the door.
Perhaps because he couldn’t pretend he didn’t see, Achille spoke to me.

“Are you okay with that, Camille? Getting close to Prince Royce means that you’ll be making enemies of the Royal Prince(King’s Younger Brother)[2] Faction, you know?”

“Mn? What’s that?”

Why did the conversation suddenly turn into this

“Today you made enemies of the son of His Majesty’s younger brother, you know… I did too, though. That’s why from now on, whether you like it or not, you’ll be seen as part of the King’s Faction.”

As expected, I don’t really get what he’s talking about.
Speaking of which, the game had a setting like what he just mentioned… or so I felt.

“Ahh… So that’s how it is.”

I suddenly understood what Achille meant.

The current king————Royce’s father, and his younger brother were presently on bad terms.
His Highness the Royal Prince was blatantly aiming for the throne.
Right now the nobles were split in two between those who supported His Majesty, the King Faction, and those who supported his brother, the Royal Prince Faction.

One day their conflict would spread to their children, and the confrontation between their children was one of the scenes in the game.
It might be that Royce-sama was thinking about quickly finding reliable allies, and bringing them to his side.
And today, we who happened upon him by chance became those allies… in other words.
He was properly thinking about his own future as well.
That’s why he immediately revealed his position to us when we first met. So that he could guarantee his allies, and absolutely not let us go.

“Mn, they might be talking about the same thing outside, huh…”

By the way, father’s life is magic, so he hasn’t been getting involved in annoying

political struggles, but because of my actions today, he might end up being labelled as part of the King Faction.
I feel a little guilty…

It seems that the ones bullying Royce-sama were the children of nobles in the Royal Prince Faction.

“I’m fine… After all, one day I’d have to choose which faction to fall under after all, and I like Royce-sama too…”

“Eh, ‘like’!? …Camille …Are you aiming to marry into power?”

Achille turned my way in shock.

“Huhh…? What are you on about?”

“I’m hoping that Prince Royce will become my patron, but I was wondering if you were aiming for the seat of the Queen, you see… Unexpected, ambitious?”

“‘Sif I am!”

That’s probably impossible. After I said that, Achille smiled happily for some reason.
He’s probably thinking ‘being Queen is impossible for someone like you‘ anyway…
That I’m not suitable for Royce-sama! I know that even if you don’t tell me.

Royce-sama is somebody that I long for.
I want to get closer to him, but I’m not thinking of something presumptuous like becoming his partner.
After all, Camille was a character that couldn’t end up with Royce-sama. The Royce-sama in the game also cringed at being relentlessly stalked by Camille.
Even while I think that this world is a dream, it’d be painful to be avoided by Royce-sama. I don’t want to be hated by him.

“That’s true. Right now you’re the only daughter of Marquis Rhodolite after all, so you have to find a husband and succeed your family, right?”

It seems that Achille who didn’t know what I was feeling assented to my answer.

“But Royce-sama being the first prince means that he has a lot of enemies, huh…”

And then, I suddenly realised.
With Royce-sama, apart from the other rival girls, there were many other flags for downfall[1].

His ‘downfall level’ was incomparable to that of I who was just a rival character.
For Royce, if the heroine chose any K other than him, then his life would automatically head full throttle towards destruction.

For example if the heroine chose the son of the Royal Prince, Roice's cousin the K of Spades, then Royce-sama would be overthrown in a coup d'etat.
If she chose the prince of the neighbouring nation, the K of Diamonds, then a war would begin and our nation would lose, with Royce-sama being placed under house arrest.
The she chose her commoner childhood friend, the K of Clovers, then a revolution would begin and the royal family would be destroyed, with Royce-sama executed.

It's impossible… Royce-sama…
Even if this is a dream world, I don't want my beloved Royce-sama to head towards ruin.
Even if it's impossible for us to become a couple, I want to protect him.
Just by myself, I might not become very helpful to him. I'm just an otaku girl after all.
However, it would be better to have even one more person to protect him.
Fortunately, I know the contents of the game, so I should be able to at least him keep away from danger.
…I've made my decision.

"I'll become a magician that protects Royce-sama."

I'll study magic even more than I already am, so that I'll be able to protect him, no matter who the enemy.
Achille looked at me in astonishment, and after looking like he was thinking for a little, he took my hand.

"Then I'll become an aide that can help Royce-sama."

"You'll become a knight?"

"Nope, an aide."

Thinking about it, Achille had that kind of position even in the game, huh. He's a character who's brains over brawn.

"I see! Then let's try our best together."

After I said that, Achille smiled like he was truly enjoying himself.
Like a child who had found an interesting game. …Well, he is a child though.

More importantly, I wonder if he could hurry up and let go of my hand.
Just how long is Achille planning on holding my hand for?

Notes

1. '*flags for downfall*' → have stated this earlier, but I am writing under the assumption that you're familiar with ADV lingo. Think of a flag, as in programming flag, because that's more or less what 'flag' means in visual novels. Raising a death flag etc. yeah?

2. 王弟(outei) means king's younger brother. Apparently that's still just 'prince' in English though, cause we don't have a word for it.

5 Years Old – J of Hearts (Part 1)

I don't remember my mother's face. When I was old enough to understand things, I was already in an orphanage.
Even if I say an orphanage, the environment was shit.
Despite there being lots of children, the facilities and goods were both poor, and it was constantly a scramble for food and utensils.
The only thing that went well in such a place was that I was good at stealing a march on and using others.

Living like that, one day a turning point appeared to me.
A man calling himself my father came to the orphanage. He said he wanted to take custody of me.
That guy who was clothed in beautiful garments smiled at I who was just skin and bones, covered in dust and rags.

"What the hell are you doing after all this time…" wasn't something I thought, and neither was I angry nor hurt.
That kind of cute and clean spirit had probably died somewhere and become a star, long ago.
'Aahh, I can finally escape from this shithole…'
This was mostly what occupied my mind.

I rode a carriage for the first time in my life, and headed together with the man who called himself my father, to his home. Inside the carriage, the man started talking about his job.
Shockingly, it seems that the guy who came to get me was a noble. Even if you say "Viscount Jade", to someone like me who's completely unrelated, I have absolutely no idea who that's supposed to be, though.
My father, Mr. Noble, had in the past hid his status and dated my mother, a bar wench in the outskirts of town.
And then, my mother got pregnant and gave birth to me, but because of his position, father couldn't stay by our side.
Even bringing us into the estate was opposed by father's mother, in other words my grandmother, and in the end things ended without him actually doing it. On top of that, father already had a legal wife and other children. Despite his beautiful appearance, he's loose in that area, huh.
Before long, my mother fell ill and passed away, and I who was a dependent was left in the care of the orphanage, in other words.

What happened just now was that at the same time my grandmother left this world, father came to bring me back from the orphanage.
It seems I'll be raised in the viscount's estate.
This guy's wishes aside, to me, being able to move from that run-down orphanage into the house of a noble is cause for huge celebration.

“Goodness! What a squalid child!”

The moment father brought me into the estate, a flashy looking woman came running.
She’s probably the legal wife that he mentioned.
Well, I can’t deny being dirty though. I mean, I couldn’t enter the likes of a bath that often in the orphanage.
I was brought to the bath in the estate.

After getting out fo the bath, I was made to change into some expensive, intensely decorated clothes, and brought to the other residents of this house.
Father, the flashy looking woman from earlier, and three children. Breaking them down, they were a boy and girl a little older than me, and a girl slightly younger.

“Let me introduce you. This is your new family, Achille.”

Father called me name.

“This is my wife Adélaïde, my son Dominique, and my daughters Déborah and Désirée.”

Adélaïde and Dominique were glaring at me with eyes filled with disgust.
Unlike father, Dominique was quite fat. I’m sure it’s because he has plenty of food to eat each day.
Though there was disdain apparent in with Déborah and Désirée’s gazes, they seemed deeply curious about me.
When I tried giving them an amiable smile, the two of them turned red, and averted their eyes. I see. It seems like I can use these two, huh.
Even in the orphanage I was ones of the more popular among women, so I was able to freely use both children and adults.
I can’t say that it’s comfortable, but this place is much better than the orphanage.
I gratefully accepted my new surroundings.

※

Father trained my step-brother and I equally.
Being nagged about these manners I wasn’t used to, or my choice in words made me honestly think that it was a crock of shit, but it’d be a piss off to be made fun of by my step-mother and step-brother, so I earnestly memorised it.
Unsatisfied with just that, they were even thoughtful enough to give me a private tutor.
History, letters, management and the like were thoroughly driven into me.
What I needed to study was simpler than expected, so within a few months, I caught up to what Dominique was learning without a problem. For some reason my tutors were shocked though.
But just when am I going to use this stuff?
Or more like, what am I supposed to do from now on?
This family is going to be succeeded by Dominique, and Déborah and Désirée are going to marry out.

Then what position am I in? Since I finally got to live somewhere good, I'd like to be able to continue living somewhere good, though.

"Goodness, is that what you were worried about? …Achille sure is cute."

After being called to Déborah's room, I tried speaking my mind, and my older sister smiled proudly.
Using that nasty secret of flutteringly covering her mouth with her hand, she looked at me with a gaze that fawned on me.

"Goodness, Achille, you have nothing to worry about, you know."

Wearing an intense perfume despite being a child, Désirée snuggled up against me as well. The scent floats around, so I honestly wish she would stop.
The only thing they inherited from father was their hair colour, and they were similar to my step-mother. They weren't beauties, and their personalities were bad too.
But they'll basically listen to whatever I say.

"Right. The second and third sons of nobles become bureaucrats, enter the knighthood, or marry into families without sons."

"Well, marrying into the wife's family and being adopted by them would be the best, wouldn't it? I dream of marrying into power as well…"

Hmmm, so that's how it is.

"Hey, Achille. I've secretly gathered some sweets without mother[/okaasama] knowing, so let's eat them together."

"I have a present for you too, Achille."

"Thank you, Déborah-oneesama, Désirée."

Déborah and Désirée blushed happily at me when I thanked them with a smile plastered on my face.
Honestly, what you really ought to have are convenient stepsisters, huh.

Mn, getting ahead in life and climbing the ranks sounds interesting too. It'd be nice to see how far I can go, and I also want to see my arrogant step-mother and step-brother's faces warp in frustration when I rise above my current position.
For now, I'll try my best to study what I can.

※

"There's a girl that I want you to meet, Achille."

One day, after I had been taken into the viscount's family for a while, father suddenly

said this to me after coming home from work.

“She’s the daughter of my boss, Marquis Rhodolite, but she’s good with magic and is a very smart girl. I think you’ll like her too, Achille.”

According to my father, she’s the young lady[2] of the marquis family and their only daughter, and there doesn’t seem to be any indication of any brothers being born from now on.
This might be somebody whose family I can marry into, like Désirée mentioned.[1]
Moreover, it seems that I’ll be meeting her at the castle. If I lead that young lady around by the nose, and find somebody in the castle as a connection for my future job, it’d be killing two birds with one stone.

“I’m looking very forward to it, Father.”

Happy with my answer, father smiled. Honestly, in my whole family, this guy is the simplest to deal with.

What awaited me in the break room of the castle’s Magic Building was a small girl with hair, pink like a field of flowers.
I’m sure it’s just a field of flowers in her mind too, like Adélaïde, Déborah or the girls that hang around them.

“It is nice to meet you, Camille-sama. My name is Achille Jade.”

When our eyes met, I gave the same sweet smile that I flashed when I first met my step-sisters.
Compared to those girls, Camille is definitely the more beautiful, and if she seems useful, I wouldn’t mind spending time with her.
And moreover, if we get along, then I might be able to succeed the marquis family in the future.

But despite that…
Far from turning red, the girl before my eyes was observing me with great interest.
Moreover, she even freaking snorted “Hmph!” along the way. What’s with this girl?

“It’s nice to meet you. My name is Camille Rhodolite.”

As though nothing had happened, she pinched her skirt and gave a small curtsey, and I found that I had my interest drawn a little.

I was told to play with Camille while father and the marquis went to work.
Since we’re already here, I’ll take this chance to chat a little.

“I have heard from my father that you are skilled in magic, Camille-sama. That you have already progressed to intermediate magic, for example…”

For now, I guess I’ll start with flattery. There’s no such thing as a human who gets

upset at praise.
However, she avoided it and countered.

“Just Camilla is fine. I mean we are the same age for once, and I’m not going to kick up a fuss about your manners, so don’t worry about it…”

Camille immediately started speaking casually, and wanted me to do so as well.
Honestly, I hate formalities so I’m thankful for it, but… I was surprised that a lady of a marquis family like her prefers to speak casually like this.
I thought that the daughters of noble families were more pretentious, like my step-sisters.

“I heard from Soleil that you’re really smart, Achille. Do you like studying?”

Did that father of mine go as far as saying that to the little kids of other families!? It’s so embarrassing that I can’t bear it.
So that my unrest wouldn’t show on my face, I stiffed my muscles.

“Yeah, I basically do nothing but study. I was told not to come out of my room too much, so…”

Primarily by my step-mother.
Will Camille sympathise with my circumstances? If she sympathises and is willing to lend me a hand, then… it’s my win.

But she didn’t move like I expected. Why!

“Since it’s been so long since you’ve been allowed outside, wanna go all out and play?”

I don’t know she was thinking but she suddenly straddled a broom that was left in the room, and told me to get on behind her.
I’m having trouble understanding her thought process[3].

“Get on.”

When I hesitated, she forcefully made me get on. And the very moment I straddled it, the broom began to lightly float.
Like that, the two of us vigorously flew out the window. Camille flew higher and higher without any hesitation.
It seems that she really is good with magic.
I’d like it if she didn’t get me wrapped up in it, though. I’m at a loss at this unfamiliar sense of floating.

“Achille, hold onto the broom tightly!”

Camille told me to hold onto the broom, but doubling as a little bit of revenge against Camille who just started flying all of a sudden, I wrapped my arms around her waist.

It's not really weird, right? I wonder if she'll turn red in embarrassment…
I looked forward and waited for her reaction, but unfortunately it seems like she wasn't discomposed in the slightest… How boring.

The castle was incomparably huge compared to the likes of a viscount estate. The scenery from high in the sky is also incredibly interesting.

"Camille… Where are you planning on heading?"

"Mn~, I haven't decided. For now, maybe we should fly a wide lap around the castle."

You didn't plan anything? …Even though you flew out the window that enthusiastically, what the hell…?
Since we were already out here though, I decided to try telling her my wish.

"I see. Then let's try going near where the important people live. If we come too close it feels like we'll be targeted by the people guarding, so let's fly a little distance away, okay?"

"That sounds interesting… But just where is it?"

"Isn't it further in?"

We headed towards where we thought people with authority might be.

Notes

1. *"This might be somebody whose family I can marry into, like Désirée mentioned."*
   It's actually "*This might be somebody who I can get 'tama no koshi' with* (is it the reverse in this case?), like Désirée mentioned."
   '玉の輿' → a common term that refers to a woman marrying into riches and power. But obviously I can't write that, so I had to cut out Achille's little note about it being the reverse.

2. '*young lady*' 令嬢(reijou) refers to like, a young-ish (non-obasan) daughter of a good family. Would usually have written 'lady', but she's like 5 so that sounds a little weirder in English, so in the end was forced to stick 'young' in front of it each time. Sorry if it sounded a little awks.

3. '*thought process*' is 思考回路(shikou kairo) or 'thought circuits'. I think it's figurative circuits, like the way the insides of an electric appliance works, so I just wrote thought process.

5 Years Old – J of Hearts (Part 2)

There was a beautiful garden, and in the centre was a white fountain surrounded by roses in full bloom.
We might be getting close to the inner palace.

Suddenly, I felt like I heard a voice, so I looked down, and when I did, I saw the figure of a child about our age.
A small boy with beautiful golden hair was being surrounded by some slightly older looking kids.
However, it seemed that they weren't playing together.

When I looked in front, I found that Camille was frowning a little.
She's an oddball, but it seems she has a strong sense of justice.

"Will you save that boy?"

When I spoke into her ear on purpose, Camille was startled enough that it was funny.
Oh shit, I've found a surprising weakness of hers. It seems that this is a bit of a habit.

"Is it okay to go down? Won't I get you mixed up in it, Achille?"

"It's fine, but? That blondie is probably a kid from the royal family… It might be a good chance for me to establish contact with him."

He's wearing clothing that's obviously higher class than the other children, and if I remember correctly, the first prince was a blonde kid of about that age.
Even if we save him, there's no loss to us.
Also, the one who's getting 'wrapped up' isn't me, but Camille. I'm already resolved.
If she saves the prince, she'll make enemies of the Royal Prince Faction.
Even a kid knows about the issue of the two great powers in this country.
…It looks like Camille isn't thinking about a thing, though.

The very moment Camille heard my reply, she thrust the broom at the noble kid who was mounting the prince.

"Heyy! Stop thaat!"

The end of the broom stabbed the guy in the arse. …Looks painful.
While Camille was arguing with the children of the Royal Prince Faction, I ran over to the prince.

"Can you stand?"

"Mn, I can… Thanks."

I helped the prince up, and took a distance from the kids.

At that moment, one of the kids tried to hit Camille.
Even if I tried to save her, I wouldn't make it in time from here… or so I thought, when Camille easily repelled it with defensive magic.
It was a perfect defensive wall. On top of that, it seems she was planning on going as far as counterattacking.

"Take thiiis!"

However, there's supposed to be a strong magic prevention barrier cast on the castle.

"Oh?[/Are?] My magic won't come out…"

Obviously. As expected, Camille's offensive magic turned into smoke and disappeared.

"Except for those in security, nobody can use offensive class magic without permission here."

The prince thoughtfully explained to Camille. This much is common sense, though.

The children of the Royal Prince Faction who were stunned by the defensive magic gradually recovered, and seeing them approach us in the corner of my eye, I called out to Camille to ride the broom.
After a quick gasp, Camille came running over. She quickly had the prince straddle the broom.

"We're ready!"

"Alright!"

Camille had us rise quickly into the air, and we distanced ourselves from the noble children.
I guided Camille who was flying a lap above their heads while laughing provocatively.

"Let's return to the Magician's Building… Father might have returned."

Camille has an immature part to her, so had I left her be, she might have continued taunting them forever.
We have to leave here before anybody else from the Royal Prince Faction arrive.

"Yeah."

She obediently listened to me, and headed back to the Magician's Building.

※

“Ahhh, I’m tired. That was heavy.”

According to Camille, carrying three people on a broom was tiring.
Even though we’re in front of the prince, she paid it no heed and dived onto the sofa.
Even though we even got to gallantly save the prince, at the very, very end she showed some seriously disappointing[1] sides of her.
My impression of Camille has taken an 180 degree turn from the one I had at our first meeting, plus another 45 degrees. She(This) is not someone(something) you can expect a normal response from.

Fortunately, it seems that the prince had no intent of finding fault with Camille’s irreverence.
He looked in on her worriedly.

“Thank you for saving me, you two. I’m Royce Garnet, the first prince of this country.”

“…Prince? Roiss?”

It looks like Camille has finally realised the prince’s identity.
It seems she really wasn’t thinking about a thing.
It had absolutely nothing to do with who the bullied child was, and she saved him purely due to her sense of justice, it seems.
She really is a young lady that’s nothing like a noble. I became even more interested in this girl who had a way of thinking that I didn’t.

“I-, I am Camille Rhodolite.”

“Ahh, Marquis Rhodolite’s… I’m glad that we met.”

Camille was shaken by each one of the prince’s words, making a hundred different expressions. For some reason I feel it unamusing, and I feel sick near my chest. Acting like this, even though she snorted during my introduction.

After that, I finished my introduction without delay.

“Huhu… For you two to have been the son and daughter of the Magician Building’s number one and two… You two really saved me. I got seen being pathetic though, haha…”

The prince smiled contentedly. Well yeah, of course he would be, since he basically gained the higher ups of the Magician Building as allies through Camille and I. …Good work in stealing allies for yourself.

“No, we just happened to be passing by, but I am glad that we were of use to you, Your Highness. What is most important is that you are safe.”

“You don’t need to be so formal, you know? Our age is close, and I’d be happy if we could get along from now on as well. Unfortunately there aren’t many people in the

castle that I'm close to, you see…"

Hearing the prince's words, Camille's face shone.

"Royce-sama… In that case, I shall ask my father[/otousama] for permission and bring Achille again to play."

I got dragged into it too, for some reason…
Well, that's fine. I get to leave that house, and increasing my contact with the prince is something to be thankful for.

"Really?"

The prince seems happy too.

"Of course! If my father allows, though."

"I'll have it arranged."

While this was happening, Marquis Rhodolite and father came into the room.
Father was stunned upon seeing the prince, but the marquis didn't seem to be interested in the prince.
The prince told the two of them about what happened outside, and hearing this, the marquis scolded Camille.
The marquis was indifferent towards the prince, but once it involved Camille, his reaction became excessive. The marquis might also be an overly doting, idiot parent like my father.

However, there's no reason to blame Camille.
Certainly I was shocked by her audacity in flying above the castle without permission, but thanks to that, we were able to save the prince.

"Marquis-sama, if you are going to blame Camille, then I am guilty as well."

Surprised that I was covering for her, Camille's eyes widened. She really is a easy to read fellow.
She probably thought that it wasn't like me. Somehow I feel that she knows about my true personality…

"Mn, Camille hasn't done anything bad. Thanks to her, I was saved."

The prince took advantage of my words to cover for Camille as well, so she wasn't scolded any further.

A butler-like man appeared to meet the prince, and the prince and the adults left the room.
They're probably talking about Camille and I… as well as what they'll be doing themselves from now on.

“Are you okay with that, Camille? Getting close to Prince Royce means that you’ll be making enemies of the Royal Prince(King’s Younger Brother) Faction, you know?”

“Mn? What’s that?”

This girl really doesn’t know a thing after all.

“Today you made enemies of the son of His Majesty’s younger brother, you know… I did too, though. That’s why from now on, whether you like it or not, you’ll be seen as part of the King’s Faction.”

“Ahh… So that’s how it is.”

Not, ‘so that’s how it is‘…
Even though she’s the daughter of the marquis, are things going to be alright like this?
It’s gone past just shock; I’m worried now.

“Mn, they might be talking about the same thing outside, huh…”

Both the Rhodolite Marquis family and the Jade Viscount family will probably be seen as the King’s Faction from now on.

“I’m fine… After all, one day I’d have to choose which faction to fall under after all, and I like Royce-sama too…”

“Eh, ‘like’!? …Camille …Are you aiming to marry into power?”

For this weird girl who knows nothing about anything to be aiming for the seat of the queen…
Was all of the stupid behaviour up until now, camouflage to deceive her surroundings?

However, she looked at me as though she was seeing something strange.

“Huhh…? What are you on about?”

“I’m hoping that Prince Royce will become my patron, but I was wondering if you were aiming for the seat of the Queen, you see… Unexpected, ambitious?”

“‘Sif I am!”

I was negated with all her strength, but hearing this, I felt relieved somewhere inside.
Why? I don’t really get it myself.
When I’m with Camille, nothing goes as I expect. I end up being led around the nose by her at every turn.

For some reason Camille was looking my way in indignation for some reason. It seems that she was dissatisfied with my “marry into power” remark.

“That’s true. Right now you’re the only daughter of Marquis Rhodolite after all, so you have to find a husband and succeed your family, right?”

Marquis Rhodolite is unmarried, and his only child is Camille.
She probably understands her position as well, in her own weirdo way.

But even though there’s nothing to complain about when it comes to her appearance and status, why on earth are the contents this?
It’s seriously unfortunate.
At this rate, won’t a husband candidate never show up? Having the number of rivals decrease is convenient for me, but…

“I’ll become a magician that protects Royce-sama.”

Completely cutting off the flow of conversation up until now, Camille suddenly declared this. What is she planning to do this time?
I really can’t take my eye of her. If I don’t take responsibility and stop her before she does something problematic… the prince is absolutely going to meet with some harm.

“Then I’ll become an aide that can help Royce-sama.”

I took Camille’s hand. She looked at me in wonder.

“You’ll become a knight?”

I have no intention of becoming anything like a knight. If I’m going to do something, I want a smarter job.

“Nope, an aide.”

One day I’ll become the prime minister or something too. I’ve decided on my goal.

“I see! Then let’s try our best together.”

Camille who probably isn’t thinking about a thing, was just simply happy about having her comrades increase.

But I didn’t overlook the fact that her eyes looked in bewilderment at the hands I was holding.
I was elated by some feeling I didn’t know welling up inside me, upon seeing Camille looking shaken for the first time.

What is this feeling, anyway? …It’s probably, the feeling of accomplishment.

From then on, my father would occasionally bring me to Camille’s house, or the castle where the prince lived.

Notes

1. The '**disappointing/unfortunate**' used to describe Camille is sort of like the disappointment or regret of having somebody who is attractive, intelligent and professional, but is unfortunately a massive masochist. It's **that** kind of **'unfortunate'**.
   Like a 残念な夫(disappointing/unfortunate husband) is basically a bum of a husband, or a husband that has one or more majorly bum-like qualities about him. Or is majorly hopeless or something.
   A 残念な美人(zannen na bijin) is a beauty that happens to have an aspect of her that just ruins the image completely. Like she's actually a complete slob at home. Or she has a massive and uncontrollable train fetish. Or she's an insufferable shotacon.

6 Years Old – Q of Hearts (Part 1)

"Look, look~!"

Seeing me throw off my outerwear in a good mood, Achille startledly averted his eyes.

"Hey, what the heck is a lady doing!"

He flusteredly picked up my outerwear, and draped it over my shoulders. Achille's face is kinda red.

"Geez, it's not like I was naked. You sure like to exaggerate, huh~"

Even though I was properly wearing a pseudo sleeveless maxi dress under my outerwear, too.

"I'm begging you, don't show me something like your naked body."

He looks super unhappy about it.

Stop looking at me like you're seeing something filthy, okay? To be treating me like some sexual deviant, how rude!

"It's not like I'm being an exhibitionist or anything. I got matching magic tattoos with my father[/otousama] so I just wanted to show it off, that's all."

On my left shoulder was a blue ivy pattern.
It was a tattoo for automatic mana restoration, and after my father taught me, I drew it on with my own mana.

Magic tattoos are the inscription of a pattern that holds a certain magical function onto human skin.
Through these patterns, you can strengthen your mana and recover your mana. In the end they just act as support, though.

You can apply these magic tattoos yourself, but to draw them requires a certain magic technique.
Depending on whether you can draw it well or not, the effectiveness varies too.
Right now I can only do ivy magic tattoos.
I want to hurry up and be able to do flower magic tattos already. They're cute, after all.
By the way, the flower tattoos have the effect of mana amplification.
And also, unlike real tattoos, magic tattoos are an extraordinary thing that can be easily drawn and erased with just magic, and they're gentle on the skin too.

“Come on, looook.”

“Stay away! Pervert!”

We began a pointless game of tag.

“Camille, Achille, what are you doing?”

Just when it seemed like I would almost be able to catch him, the one who called out to us, Royce-sama, showed up at the door.
Right now, Achille and I are at the castle to play, at Royce-sama’s invitation.
The two of us come to visit him quite often.

“Ah, Royce-sama! Look, look… ugu-”

When I was about to show off my magic tattoo to Royce-sama, Achille pinned my arms behind my back from behind.

“What on earth are you planning to show His Highness!”

“The magic tattoo that I drew myself…”

“I told you, don’t strip!”

Damn you, Achille… Don’t get in my way.
Isn’t Royce-sama laughing at me now?

“Camille, you got a magic tattoo?”

“Yes!”

“Isn’t it bad for a girl to get a magic tattoo?”

Hauuun~ Royce-sama is such a gentleman.

Certainly, even if they’re magicians, not many women get magic tattoos.
Women with patterns on their skin are avoided by men, after all. If you have a magic tattoo, you’d be at an overwhelming disadvantage when it came to marriage prospects.
As for the Rhodolite Marquis family, since father is like that, I can get as many magic tattoos as I want, but normally a family wouldn’t allow it. Even more so if you were a noble.

“I don’t mind. I’m not aiming to be popular with men, and I don’t mind sacrificing my springtime of youth to protect you, Royce-sama!”

If magic tattoos are necessary to master magic, then I’ll draw as many as it takes.
And during times when I can’t have magic tattoos no matter what, isn’t there no

problem if I just erase them in a flash with magic?
Hmm?[Are?] It looks like Royce-sama is backing away a little, but that's just my imagination, right?

※

"…And so, I want to have a look at the castle town. Of course there'll be bodyguards, and I have permission from my dad as well."

It seems that the reason we were called out today was to accompany Royce-sama on his incognito visit to the castle town.
Achille looked at at Royce-sama in disbelief.
He was probably worried about the kind of dangers that could befall Royce-sama if he left the castle.

"It's already decided, huh. Then the two of us have no choice but to follow you."

A date in the castle town with Royce-sama! Yahooo!

"Please allow me to show you around. I've snuck out into town countless times in secret from my dad or the servants, so I've already checked all of the famous stores!"

When I declared this with pride, Royce-sama looked at me with eyes tinged with misgivings.

"Ummm… I'll pretend I didn't hear that, okay?"

"When I go out, I aim for when my father is away, and I leave an 'afternoon nap' version of a body double doll in my room, so even now, the servants still don't know, you know?"

The castle town during the day was very lively.
We headed down into town, incognito.
Me, Achille, Royce-sama, as well as two of Royce-sama's bodyguards were travelling together.
The remaining guards were watching over us from in hiding.

"Is there anywhere that you'd like to go, Royce-sama?"

I spread open a map of the castle town that I obtained beforehand.

"This is a pseudo-pancake shop with lines of customers."
This is a pseudo-popcorn shop with lines of customers.
This is my favourite shop for magic books.
This is my favourite shop for dried lizards."

"Hang on, the second half is clearly weird, you know."

Achille made fun of me.

“Your Highness, where do you want to go? It’s dangerous to leave things to Camille.”

“Mmmn… I guess I just want to look around the marketplace normally.”

“That’s an excellent idea!”

One of the guards immediately cut into the conversation.

“There are a lot of shops gathered in the marketplace, and it’d probably be easy to understand each person’s livelihood… Please be wary of pickpockets and purse snatchers.”

With that one splendid introduction by the first guard who had suddenly become enthusiastic, we ended up heading towards the marketplace.

The marketplace was quite prosperous. Because it was still midday, it wasn’t that crowded, but once the night fell, more people would gather.
Royce-sama was curiously turning this way and that. He looked like he was having a lot of fun.

“This is?”

“Ahh, the Gerugero nut? It has use in digestive medicine.”

“Then what’s this?”

“It is Gangrou meat. It’s hard and not very delicious… Ahh, there seems to be interesting things further down.”

The first guard who had completely taken the initiative continued to guide us through the town at his own discretion and bias.
Well, whatever. Royce-sama seems to be having fun too, after all.
Achille and I quietly followed after them.

“I wonder if this is far enough…”

Suddenly, the first guard stopped still.

“What’s wrong?”

Called out Royce-sama, in wonder.

We had come to a street a little distance away from the marketplace. There was nobody here.
Normally there should have been stores selling weapons or magical items, but it

seems it was empty today.

“Oi, oi… There’s nothing here, you know? Should we go back the way we came?”

The second guard was about to lead Royce-sama back the way we came, when it happened.

Something that shone silver came flying, and pierced into the second guard’s back.

6 Years Old – Q of Hearts (Part 2)

The second guard fell to the ground without a sound. Protruding from his back was a large knife.
A red stain was spreading across his clothing.

“Wha-!”

Royce-sama flusteredly took some distance from the first guard. I stepped out in front of Royce-sama in a panic.

“It’ll be okay, the other guards should be here any minute…”

“Unfortunately for you… help won’t be coming.”

While suppressing the terror that rose up in my body, I tried to soothe the prince, but the first guard cut in.
In that instant, I recognised this man as an enemy.
Grasped in his hand was a knife just like the one protruding from the second guard’s back.
This guy isn’t a guard; he’s a villain aiming for Royce-sama!

“All of them are probably already dead, you know.”

The villain smiled inappropriately.

“Royce-sama! Please es…”

Once again, the villain cut off my words. This time not with words, but with an attack.
I immediately blocked the swing of his blade with defensive magic. If there’s only one of them, then we might be able to get away somehow.

However, that faint hope of mine easily disappeared with the appearance of the villain’s comrades, coming one after another out of hiding.
In total there were five of them, and including the guy with the blade, there were six.
Probably because they had defeated the guards in hiding, a number of them were covered in blood spray.
These villains might have been mixed in amongst the guards as well.
Three six year old children, versus a total of six of these villains.
We were at an overwhelming disadvantage. For some reason I recalled the time I was cornered by the gyaru group in the world outside this dream. Is this my life flashing before my eyes?

If I die here, would I wake up from this dream…? Would it be fine if I got stabbed just a little?

…As if, right?…

I laughed dryly at my stubbornness in still supporting myself with the idea that this is a dream after all this time.
If I'm killed here, I'll probably die for real. Probably, dying without being able to return to being a high schooler… Without having protected Royce-sama…
I've been averting my eyes all this time, but somewhere in my heart, I actually knew.

…I've been running away.
This world… and my circumstances… I've been putting off actually thinking about them properly.

I mean… if I didn't think of this world as a dream, it was just filled with things that I couldn't accept, after all…
I want to see my parents, I want to see my friends, I want to pass on being a villain… I want to go home…

If it was a dream, then I could just enjoy things however I wanted, but if it was a real then I couldn't just have fun without thinking, right?

…I …don't want that…

"Camille!"

At Achille's voice, my consciousness kicked back in. And at the same time, I felt a pain in my left arm.
The villain's blade had cut apart my skin. They had broken through my defensive wall using magic.
Being immersed in my thoughts in this situation was stupid of me.
Right now I had to let Royce-sama, and while I was at it, Achille, escape safely… Of course, I planned on returning alive as well.

"Get away from us!"

I immediately let out a wind attack from my hand, and sent the villain flying. A few companions of his who were dragged into it tumbled about.
Right now the magic I could use were limited. Because I was six, they hadn't taught me any offensive magic that might have been dangerous.
With a magic of this level, I couldn't expect anything more than putting some distance between us.

I immediately put a barrier back up, and used magic that called for aid.
Countless butterflies flew out from my hand, and headed towards the castle at the speed of light. It's the most common communication spell.
With this, I should be able to get into contact with my father immediately. Father[/Otousama]… Please hurry!
Even while I did that, I continued firing magic at the villains without rest.

“Camilla, can you use any offensive magic besides the one just now?”

Achille’s quiet voice reached my ear.

“Fire, water, lightning, wood, …I can use a bunch, but their power is only the same as that one, so… Ah!”

I see. It wasn’t working because I was sticking to attacking. I can just buy time or escape.

“The air! If I thin the air, I might be able to buy time… If I reduce the oxygen concentration…”

I focused my mind.

After changing the barrier into a dome, I reduced the oxygen in the area around the villains. Magic to manipulate the atmosphere was difficult so concentration was required.
The villains had probably noticed that the oxygen had thinned, because unrest ran through them.
But it wasn’t perfect. If they went out of the area that I designated, then they could breathe in as much oxygen as they wanted.
We were still at the end of the market, so I couldn’t apply the magic over a large area without getting bystanders involved.

“It’s alright, I’ll help.”

Suddenly, I felt the flow of mana from Achille.

“Achille?”

“I learned a little from father… It seems that I have some talent for magic, after all.”

When did he…? He’s never mentioned this even once before, right? Or more like, Achille wasn’t a character who could just easily fire off magic like that, right?

The Achille in the game acted as the prince’s brain, and while he was in the magic academy, I never got the impression that he was that good with magic.
Rather than learning magic properly, he was the type who was better with creating magic tools or magic medicines, and he kept his position as J by compensating almost completely through studies.
Was it because this was a situation he didn’t expect?

Achille placed a barrier around the villains. With this, they wouldn’t be able to escape from the low oxygen area. The fact that my inability prevented me from removing all oxygen completely made the situation harsh for us.
The villains who had underestimated some six year olds fell into chaos, and gasped at the lack of oxygen.

Three of them collapsed unconscious due to trouble breathing. …I'm grateful that some weaklings were mixed in with them.
However, amongst the villains was one who lightly waved his hand, and the moment he did, the flow of the air changed. My magic was cancelled.
It seems that there was a magician in their group. He spoke in a displeased voice.

"What a conceited brat."

While Achille's barrier magic still held, I took out a paintbrush from my pocket and quickly turned it huge with magic.
My simply made pseudo-broom was complete. Because it was a magic I came up with just recently, the feeling of riding it was inferior to a normal broom, but it was still fast.
I filled the pseudo-broom with my mana and set a location for it to automatically head to.

"Royce-sama, this seats one, but please get on. It will take you directly to the castle!"

At least he who was the prince needed to get away.
However, Royce-sama refused in a loud voice that he had never used before.

"No! Are you telling me to abandon you two?"

"Their target is you. Hurry and get on!"

Following that, Achille's magic barrier was also dispelled.
Because of my wind magic they couldn't easily come near us, but the villains were free to move now.
Because of that, one of the knives they threw bounced off my barrier, and another person's arrow stuck into it.
From behind, the magician was working to dispel my barrier. We were done for.

"Royce-sama!"

By now, I was shrieking at him.
Achille changed to attack magic, and fired off some ice.
However, because it was as small as a pebble, it only had the might of a hailball. While I maintained my barrier, I fired off the same magic.
With Royce-sama in the middle, I was in front, Achille was behind, and the two of us fired off magic.

Finally, the enemy magician's magic dispelled my barrier.
It's over!
I lost myself in firing off ice to the limits of my mana. I increased the force of the ice with wind magic.
By now I was just a mess, and firing off magic without worrying about how I looked.
It felt like there was rock, or wood, or metal or something mixed in with the ice, but it wasn't the time to be worrying about that. At any rate, I just fired stuff off at them.

Thankfully, the magic tattoo was useful in preventing me from running out of mana.
A villain's knife grazed my cheek. Achille had countless wounds on his arms and legs too.
…But despite that, Royce-sama still wouldn't fly away for us.

The magician let off some purple smoke… It was probably poison.
I'm already super at my limits, so please stop! I let out a scream in my mind.
I changed from ice to fire and desperately burnt the gas. I wonder if this gas is inflammable…
Even though I said I would protect Royce-sama, would I be unable to do a thing in the end? Everything I do is half-baked.
I could feel Achille manipulating the air from behind me.
At that moment, something exploded near us, and an unmanned stall flew into two of them and blew them away.

But taking that moment to act, a man holding a knife leapt towards us.

"Stay awayy!"

I turned a ball of flame his way, but the guy's knife passed through the flames, drew near us… and a shock ran through my stomach.
My vision turned white from the pain————

"UWAHHHH"

For some reason the man that stabbed me let out a scream…
Why the hell are you screaming, the one who got stabbed was me…

"Royce-sama… Ru…"

My consciousness went out just like that.

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"Camille, Camille…"

So annoyingg. Let me sleep a bit more.

"…Cut it out… Get up."

I don't wanna. My body is kinda heavy.

"If you don't get up, I'll kiss you, you know?"

"Fugah-!"

Even though you're just a kid, what a joke to make!

I sat up with a start. A sharp pain ran through my abdomen.

“Like I thought… It felt like your sleep was getting shallow.”

At my bedside was Achille.

“Ach…ille… Huh? Why? I’m… alive?”

I was sleeping on a plain bed.
Is this, inside the castle? I’m…

I remembered the horrible memory from just before, and checked my abdomen, but the deep wound stab wound that should have been there was gone.
It seems somebody used healing magic, but even then, a little pain remains.
Ahh, as expected it’s not at the level of ‘a little’… I can feel a level of pain impossible for a dream, throbbing through my body. It seems that completely recovering will take a little.

“You were saved.”

“And Royce-sama?”

“…He’s safe. He made it into the marquis’ care uninjured. Since he had just gone through something dangerous, right now he’s locked up in his room.”

“Thank goodness…”

It looks like the thin wounds that Achille suffered are healed as well.
It seems that my father and Soleil are busy dealing with the aftermath.

“Hey, what happened after that? After that, I collapsed and don’t remember a thing…”

“…You don’t remember? Anything?”

“Mn, I don’t remember anything from after I got stabbed…”

Achille looked at me in wonder.

“The guy who stabbed you… got burned, you see…”

“Eh?”

Burned… he says?

“Like I was saying, the moment you got stabbed, the man burned. The knife he was holding melted in an instant too… Wasn’t it something you did, Camille?”

“…You’re kidding…”

"…Could it be, that it was unconscious?"

According to Achille, I emitted a flame that burnt the man who stabbed me into a crisp, and the blade he was holding literally melted in an instant.
I don't remember this at all… Maybe I made a mistake in the moderation of my magic because of the pain.
Maybe only the temperature rose to an abnormal level… Or maybe the moment I used flame magic, my mana poured into his knife and turned into heat… The latter sounds like it might be possible…
It seems that immediately after that, my father and the magicians of the Magic Building came running. All of the criminals except for the blackened man were caught.

The ones that attacked us were small fry of the lowest among the lowest ranks.
However, because they blended in skilfully with the real guards, the real guards didn't notice the villains either. They had been hiding as guard soldiers over the span of years.
The result was that negligence was born amongst the guards.
But, even though they were the prince's guards… weren't they too weak? Even though they're the guards for the next king, this was really too shabby an outcome.
It looked like the villains were probably employed by the Royal Prince Faction, but they were skilfully untraceable, so it was difficult to determine who the culprit was.
Because the attackers themselves were too far down, they couldn't teach us anything either. It seems like it'll take time to determine the culprit.
To be done in by such small fry… I'm still too inexperienced. How pathetic…

"…-"

At this point, the trembling came.
I steeled my nerves because I had to protect Royce-sama, but it was actually very scary.
I've never had a knife turned towards me before, to say nothing of being stabbed…
When we faced off against the attackers, I was anxiously wondering if we would just end up being killed there, so it can't be helped.

"Camille… It's okay now. The rest of them were caught as well, after all."

Even though Achille looks like he doesn't care about the feelings of people he has no vested interests in, he's been watching me properly.
He's probably noticed that my feelings of terror have returned too.
Even though he should be scared too, he tried his best to sooth me.

"I… burned somebody… and killed them?"

A different feeling of terror began to well up.
After turning into a black lump, no human would survive.
Unconsciously burning a person to cinders… is too terrifying.

“You protected His Highness and I, Camille. If that guy lived, all of us would have been killed.”

Guarding somebody meant… becoming a magician that would protect Royce-sama meant… this kind of thing.
It wasn’t just something you just declared on a whim. To be realising it only now, what an incredible idiot I am.

“Huh…?”

Tears were dropping onto the back of my clenched hands.
Crap, am I, crying? You’re kidding, what do I do? It won’t stop…
The more impatient I got, the more tears began to overflow, dropping again and again.
Ah, Achille is visibly shaken. To be troubling a six year old like this, I’m really too miserable…
No matter how bad things have gotten, hasn’t my mental age regressed too much?

“Uuu, …hic…”

Aahh, Achille… Could you perhaps pretend you didn’t see this, and leave the room?
My sobbing…

“It’s okay now… You haven’t done anything wrong, Camille.”

Far from leaving, he instead closed the distance. He softly and soothingly stroked me on the head.
The movements were clumsy, but was he trying to comfort me? …Even though he’s Achile, for him to be treating me kindly.
Isn’t it because I’m overcome with emotion that I ended up crying this much? My mind is in chaos.

“For someone who’s going to ruin me… Don’t treat me so kindly… hic…”

“…I don’t really understand what you’re saying.”

After that, Achille continued to stay with me until my tears stopped.
Surprisingly, he can take action even without it being calculated, and it seems that he has some kind parts to him too.

7 Years Old – Q of Hearts

I, who was a high schooler, was constantly controlled by the gazes and opinions of those around me, skilfully went with the flow, and lived however it led me.
So that I could look even a little better to others, I paid attention to nothing but the eyes of others, and did nothing but keep up appearances.
But what meaning did that have?
In this world, there was no meaning in being 'reasonably good'.
From when I was three years old until I was five, I averted my eyes from reality, and lived by nothing but my desires and whims.
Were I to accept this world in the true sense of the word, there was no way that it would be alright to stay that way.

I'm reflecting on my actions.
The way I've been up until now is no good.
If I don't change myself, my wishes won't come true.

Up until now, have I ever devoted my body and soul to anything?
Paying no heed to flattery from others, and earnestly facing reality without running away…

Right now, I'm wholeheartedly studying magic. The amount of study is incomparable to any I've done before.
I don't want to feel that way again. I don't want to despair due to my lack of power.
Without being content with only the tasks given by my tutor, wholeheartedly reading magic textbooks from morning until night, and occasionally showing up at the Magic Building…
Aimée and the other servants backed away from me due to my enthusiasm.
But I don't mind if people back away from me. I've decided not to worry about the eyes of others anymore.
If I don't, let alone Royce-sama, I won't even be able to protect myself.

In the incident that happened in the castle town last year, had I messed up, Royce-sama, Achille and I would have died. I won't let something like that happend again.
If I don't master magic more than anyone… If I don't become strong enough to protect my loved ones from everybody else…
Even though this is supposed to be the world of an otome game, there's no saving, loading or resetting.

————This world is my reality.

I felt impatient.
Protecting Royce-sama from destruction was not something so simple.

I'm not certain if they could understand my zeal, but when I turned seven I was allowed some work at the Magic Building.

My job at the Magic Building was to be an apprentice “Red”. It was a job within the red robed magician group that I saw at the castle before.
The colour of the clothing worn by magicians working at the castle depended on their jobs.
“Blue” was a magical research job, involving the development of new varieties of magic, items or medicine.
“Black” worked as the guards of people of influence.
“Red” had the most personnel, and were responsible for all of the work not covered by “Blue” or “Black”.
Doing things like solving problems that arose in the country’s cities and villages, heading to certain places to do magic inspections, eliminating monsters that troubled the citizens; it was a pretty hectic job.

It seems that even monsters appear in this world. It’s seriously too “fantasy”.
They mostly live deep in the forest or in caves; dark places with no human presence, and if you lived normally in a town, you would almost never see one.
They didn’t appear in the setting of the otome game.
If something like monsters appeared in the academy, it would be undoubtedly a major incident, so that’s basically the end of the story, but…

Starting from simple inspections, then eventually making my way to exterminations of lower class monsters, I would be learning the jobs of “Red”, little by little.
During this time, it was made sure that Royce-sama had capable adult guards with him.
As expected, guarding the prince wasn’t a job you could leave to a little six year old, so until we entered the academy, there was no need for me to stick to Royce-sama.
My contact with him was limited to visiting a few times a week.
It seems that Achille was also working a simple administration/odd-jobs job. That was because he was an apprentice like me, though.

While living like this, one day, I had an encounter.
An encounter with the enemy of Royce-sama that would appear during the K of Spades route; the heroine’s rival, the Q of Spades.

Mei Zakro, the Q of Spades, was the loyal servant of the son of the king’s younger brother, the K of Spades.
She and her younger twin brother served as the guards of the K of Spades.

Mei was a taciturn woman who loyally followed her orders, clad in a mysterious aura, and amongst the rivals she was the one with the best personality. Incidentally, the one with the worst personality was Camille.
After all, Camille was jealous towards the heroine who was growing close to the K of Hearts that she was one-sidedly in love with, and was a rival who harassed the heroine as much as possible.

However, when it came to Mei, because her love for her lord was too strong, she ran wild and persistently tried to get rid of the heroine who was deceiving her lord.
Once the heroine cleared the K of Spades route, the fact that Mei tried to harm the

heroine was revealed and she was fired, and like that it became unknown what happened to her.
…Up until the end, she remained a somewhat mysterious rival.

That Mei Zakro was now bawling in the middle of the corridor.

“FUAAAAAAAAAH, NOOOOOOO! WHERE AREEE YOUUUUU?”

That mysterious, devoted-to-her-duties, silent beauty is also the same age as me right now. There’s not a trace of mysteriousness here.

“So Mei was working from such a young age too, huh…”

Her deep blue hair and dark skin were just like in the game, and tears overflowed endlessly from her golden eyes.

The enemy was a little girl… It might get annoying to get involved.
I have no idea what to do with crying children.
But I’ll feel guilty leaving her alone too. And I look like a child too, right now…

“What’s wrong? Are you looking for someone?”

“WAAAAAAAAAH!”

Just like Achille did to me recently, I tried patting her on the head.
It seems that it was effective, and the girl’s sobbing receded just a little.
Just by knowing her future self, seeing her crying face feels plenty wrong.

“Wheresss, Raiga-sama?”

“Ehh…”

It seems like she’s looking for her master Raiga Transbaal; in other words the K of Spades.
Was Mei all LOVE♥Master at this young an age?
But wow, it really is too weird seeing this gap between the always calm, mysterious Mei from the game, and the Mei right now.

“You’re looking for Raiga-sama?”

“Uuu… I had an afternoon nap, and then Raiga-sama was gone… (sob)”

Mei and afternoon naps… It really is a mismatched combo.
I stayed by her side for a while comforting her, so her crying calmed down a lot.

After a while came the pitter patter sounds of multiple people coming down the other end of the hallway.

“Meii!”

In an instant, I could tell who the owner of those footsteps were… How troubling.

“Raiga-sama!”

Before my eyes stood the K of Spades, Royce-sama’s enemy, Raiga Transbaal.
Because he’s Royce-sama’s cousin, he’s an ikemen as well, but that overpowering atmosphere of his has not a smidgen of friendliness.
Behind him was Mei’s younger twin brother, J of Spades Kai Zakro, standing there inconspicuous as the air.
Her face still dirtied from crying, Mei reached her hand out to him.

“Why are you in a place like this…? I told you not to leave the room, didn’t I”

“Fueeh, because, when I woke up Raiga-sama wasn’t there.”

“Mei… You musn’t… bother Raiga-sama…”

Ah! Even though he’s young, the little brother is speaking just like in the game.
Kai the little brother was taciturn and mysterious just like his older sister.

“You. What did you do to Mei?”

Raiga glared at I, who had been reduced to decoration.
When he did, Mei grabbed Raiga’s arm and shook her head side to side in protest.

“The pink Oneechan didn’t do anything wrong!”

Hang on, is ‘the pink Oneechan’ referring to me? Certainly I didn’t give my name, but…

“She listened to me when I was crying!”

“Is that so…?”

Raiga made a complicated expression. He was clad in a difficult-to-approach aura, but this expression of his held some amity.

“You’re… Royce’s hanger-on-er, right?”

He knows about me? The information network of the royal prince’s son sure is amazing, huh…
It’s still better than being called a flunky, I guess.

“I’m not a hanger-on-er; I’m his future guard, you know.”

“Like I care… Oi, Mei! Don’t wipe your snot on my clothes!”

The dignity of the royal prince's son is being ruined.
As I thought, I feel like I don't really understand their relationship.

"Did Mei-chan always have this kind of personality? At a glance she looks like the calm type, but…"

'Could it be…?' I wondered about a certain possibility in my heart.
Raiga might know something about it.

The one who reacted to my worsd wasn't Raiga, but surprisingly Kai.

"You… What… do you know… about Mei?"

I don't know where he got it from, but he was holding a long needle in one hand.
Oi, oi, are you trying to threaten me with a deadly weapon? We're in a corridor used by other people, you know?
The twins Mei and Kai were characters that looked docile, but were prone to quickly resorting to violence.

"Stop it, Kai."

Held in check by his lord, Kai readily withdrew. He really does feel like the "by my lord's orders" type, huh.
After making sure that Kai sheathed his weapon, Raiga turned to me and spoke.

"Mei has been like this since I met her. Don't make weird complaints."

"…I'm sorry. I was just thinking that they weren't a very similar pair of twins."

"Just because they're twins, doesn't mean their personalities have to be the same, right?"

"You are… right…"

"We're heading back."

" "Yes!" "

Leaving the frozen me behind, Raiga left with the twins in tow.

Does Raiga not know, or was that acting?
But Kai knows something for sure.
I can't say anything since I only know how she was in the future, but perhaps Mei is a human from the same place as me…
I don't have any confidence in that though…

7 Years Old – J of Hearts

"Don't get so cocky, you fucking brat!"

"Why the hell was he left a job higher than ours!?"

Hahh… The boys who were my co-workers were picking a fight with me.
Whereever you go, there are idiots like these, huh. Are they slightly older than me…?
They're a bunch that ignore their own shortcomings and use reasons like social status and age to discriminate against others.
They're gunna pick a fight with a seven year old apprentice?

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"Ahahahah, you have it tough too, huh~"

After meeting with Camille for the first time in a while, she had a huge laugh. It seems that she saw what happened just now.

"Just because it's someone else's problem…"

"I get told that too, you know, "Connected Girl" they call me… P-Pfft… Since I'm the daughter of a marquis, it's true though."

Seeing Camille talk about it like it isn't a problem, I start feeling like an idiot for getting annoyed.

"Royce-sama says that he'll come once his classes are done, you know."

"It seems it'll take a little longer, huh…"

Because I had business at the castle today, we all decided to meet today.
Camille and I are candidates for his future aides, so there are a lot of chances to meet with His Majesty during the breaks between our work.
There are times when I meet him alone too, but there are also days when I'll be meeting him together with Camille.

"Achille, you help Royce-sama with his studies, right?"

"When he asks me, yeah. His Highness has a number of talented private tutors, so I think it'd be quicker just to ask them, but…"

"But you explain things easily, right? I mean you immediately remembered the political science stuff you were taught the other day."

It seems that Camille is bad with studying. It wasn't like that in the past, but recently there's been an obvious trend towards it.

She's concentrating on magic too much.
In exchange for the neglect of her studies, her ability in magic has recently been growing at a strange rate.
Both her arms and her legs are marked with magic tattoos now, and she's done for as a woman.
However, Camille doesn't care about the eyes of society at all, and just keeps marking herself all over with her custom made tattoos of strange patterns like butterflies, or hearts, or angel wings.
And I just wish she would stop stripping her outerwear off each time, and trying to show me.
That time when she tried to show me the rose or whatever tattoo on her chest, I had no idea what to do, you know.

"Ahh-! Oneechan!"

Suddenly, a dark skinned girl came running out of nowhere. She's somebody I've seen.
This woman was… one of the followers of the royal prince's son, wasn't she?

"Mei-chan?"

You're acquaintances!?

"Oneechan, even though I asked you to come play, how come you won't come?"

"Sorry, Meichan. There are some grown-up reasons behind it."

"Really… Then, it's okay if I come to play?"

"Of course!"

For some reason this woman has gotten close to Camille, even though they're supposed to be enemies.

"Indeed, of course it's no good. …Geez, just when I was wondering where you ran off to…"

From behind the woman named Mei appeared the son of the royal prince, Raiga Transbaal.

"Nooo! I wanna play with Oneechan!"

"…You mind not luring my attendant?"

Raiga glared at Camille with a cold gaze, but Camille wasn't concerned in the

slightest.

Just when did she become acquainted with Raiga? Even though the two of them are supposed to be completely avoiding each other.
Even for the areas they're active in, the King Faction are in the eastern building, whilst the Royal Prince Faction are segregated in the western building, so except for work, there are few places they're together.
Speaking of which, this was the central building, wasn't it?
The central building has a lot of workplaces, so both factions come and go.

"Sorry, Mei-chan, your bully of a master said that we couldn't play… I like Meichan, but there's nothing I can do, huh…? (In regards to this and that.)"

"Raiga-sama you idiott!"

With that, Mei ran back towards the western building. Camille is snickering away happily.

"Youu… This is the seventh time. I told you not to get involved with Mei, didn't I?"

It seems that the two of them come into contact surprisingly often. Despite the fact that they're hostiles, it kind of seems that both Raiga and Camille are relaxed around each other.

"Mei-chan is the one that comes to me, so I can't refuse."

"Tsk…"

With a sour expression, Raiga swiftly disappeared in the direction of the western building.
Camille fluttered her hand in a wave. She really doesn't know fear.

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Expensive tableware and small, round tables that seem like they would be popular amongst females, were lined up in the wide garden.
A garden party in name only, it was a gathering to strengthen the bonds of the King Faction. Of course, the members were all nobles of the King Faction.
Since a few years ago, the Rhodolite Marquis family and the Jade Viscount family were able to be invited here as well.
Today's party was one that invited the children of these nobles as well. Camille and I were invited as well, so we attended.

"Achile-samaa!"

"Kyaa~, please look this wayy!"

“Aahh! Just now, our eyes met!”

I’m ridiculously popular with the young ladies of around my age.
It’s annoying but, I can’t forget to be sociable. After all, this might come in handy one day, right?
I suddenly felt a gaze, and when I turned around, I found that Camille was, black tea in one hand, looking this way with a smirk.

“Hey, lady-killer!”

She mocked me with words that might come from my drunk father. …It’s kind of irritating.

Camilla has no males around her.
Since her whole body is marked with magic tattoos, if you ask me if it’s natural, then it is, but…
When Camille made her debut, she was surrounded by a huge group of men. Like me, they were second and third sons aiming to marry into her family.
Probably being fed up with this, she decided to try attending with all her magic tattoos on. It was shallow thinking, but super effective.
Still, backing away so easily just because of magic tattoos, what a bunch of useless guys.

“Royce-samaa!”

“Kyaaaa! How wonderfull!

“Haah… That smile, is so dazzling that I’m dizzy…”

His Highness is popular too. Wherever he went, high-pitched voices would call out.

“Royce-sama… Shan’t we have a chat over there?”

“No, Royce-sama will with I…”

“No! With I!”

“You vixen! Step away from His Highness!”

“What! You’re the one…! Ah! You over there! Would you mind not stealing a march on us!?”

A battle between five, six women unfolded around His Highness.

“Royce-sama will be eating cake with me!”

“What was thattt!? You damned tattoo woman!”

“What!? You make-up monster…! Even though you’re just a little kid!”

At some point, Camille joined the battle.

That one area alone turned into chaos. I don’t want to be near such a weird place.

“Achille…”

His Highness unsteadily walked over to me. It seems that his spirit was shaved down upon seeing that ugly dispute between the women unfold before his eyes, and he came here to escape.
After I offered him a nearby chair, he basically collapsed into it.

“That seemed rough.”

“Mn… I’m a little tired. All of these young ladies sure are energetic, huh.

“For women like those, couldn’t you just use Camille like insect repellent”

She’s an overly loyal guard hopeful and holds goodwill towards His Highness, and yet doesn’t desire to become queen. While I’m saying this, I should mention that she isn’t acting in self-interest either, and neither is she looking for repayment.
Truly, an overly devoted and convenient partner.

“Mmmmmn, but you know…”

“What is it?”

His Highness looked like he was having trouble saying something, while he made eye contact with me. It’s like he’s trying to get me to say something.

“…Achille, are you okay with that?”

“Sorry…?[1] To begin with, why did you ask me something like that?”

Hearing my words, His Highness let out a huge sigh. It’s rare for him to take such an attitude.
He’s kind to everybody without distinction, and is a person who is in a sense the very model of a ‘prince’[2].

“You know, Achille. You shouldn’t have the girl you like, do something like that, you know?”

“Hahh?”

‘like’…? I, like Camille?
Even though I’m in front of His Majesty, I let out a foolish sound.

“You’re always thinking about Camille, right? When Camille is paying attention to me, your mood turns bad after all.”

“That is not the case.”

“Wasn’t it you who reacted first when Camille was stabbed? You gave her first aid too, and afterwards you were looking after her the entire time, after all.”

“That was just coincidence… That time the Marquis was stuck with dealing with the aftermath, and Your Highness couldn’t leave the room, after all.”

His Highness sighed again. Just why?

“Does Your Highness not feel anything about Camille…?”

Unconsciously, something other than the words I prepared came out of my mouth. Even though I had no intention of asking such a thing.
His Highness made a surprised expression, but it’s too late to take back my words now.

“Me? About Camille?”

“I mean just now, she participated in the ‘Struggle for His Highness’, didn’t she?”

Even though she has such obvious good will towards him, His Highness didn’t look swayed by Camille in the slightest.

“I… wonder if it’s that kind of “good will”. Camille absolutely never crosses a certain line, and… it’s because of that that I can continue being around her, though.”

With those words, His Highness fell into thought. Camille’s good will had no effect at all.

“Are you saying that you do not feel anything for Camille, Your Highness?”

“I like Camille, but I don’t think these feelings are romantic. She’s somebody who’ll succeed her marquis house, and I’ll probably have a fiancée before long as well.”

It’s a standard answer, huh. And Camille said this earlier too.
Why on earth am I asking questions with such obvious answers?
I feel annoyed at myself for having said something needless. Besides that, somehow the area near my chest feels bad…

“Camille is strong, isn’t she…?”

While gazing at Camille who was even now doing battle with the other young ladies, His Highness suddenly muttered this.
She’s wrapped up in an intense all-female battle at the table on the far side of the

room, but… that's probably not what His Highness is talking about. …Moreover,

"Camille is, strong?"

————There's no way that she is.

"Mmn, even though she's a girl, she's trying hard to become my guard. Because of me, she got stabbed once, but… despite that, even now she'll stay by my side."

His Highness spoke of the past painfully. When our conversations come to that topic, his beautiful face always warps bitterly.

Certainly, Camille is different to the other daughters of noble families. Occasionally she'll have a strangely mature face on, and she's good at handling magic too. If it's to protect His Highness, she won't hesitate to fight either.
But how can he declare that she's strong just because of that?

Even in the incident from a year ago, she was trembling and crying by herself on that bed in the infirmary.
If I weren't there, there probably wouldn't have been anybody who'd have known.

Camille is just acting stronger than she is, and is by no means strong.

Why won't he notice this? His Highness, of all people.
Even though Camille has been trying that hard, all for the sake of protecting him.
If it were me…

Having thought that far, I was suddenly struck by lightning.

————Just what on earth would I do, if it were me?

Notes

1. 'Sorry…?' is ' "Okay" or anything else…' → implies idea of 'even if you ask me "okay" or whatever, that has nothing to do with anything/'okay or not' has nothing to do with me/the situation anyway. Those words don't fit the situation to begin with.' It's a really common Japanese phrase, but afaik we don't have an equivalent in English. Would usually just say "Huh?" and skip to the second part, which is "Why did you ask me something like that?"

2. 'who is in a sense the very model of a 'prince'' Gunna assume she meant 鑑 and not 鏡, though apparently it's become common to use the former even when they mean the latter.

7 Years Old – K of Hearts

I have no confidence in myself. And, I hate myself.
Because of my position as the prince, everybody around me serves me as though it's natural, but in the end, am I somebody worth doing that for?

From when I was small up until now, I've had my life targetted. Up until I was five, I almost never left the inner palace.
There were a lot of dangers outside, after all. Ojisan was targetting my life after all…
Those were the reasons.
My world was a closed one.

The first friend I made in that small world of mine was my servant Colette.
She passed away before my eyes… Because of the poison that was in the snacks suddenly brought in by a maid.

The next friend I made was my guard Adolphe.
He also died before my eyes… When somebody tried to assassinate me, he covered me.

The third friend I made was my tutor Émile.
He tried to betray me and kill me, and was instead killed by my guard.

If I didn't exist, none of them would have died…

After that, I decided to try my best to have as few people close with me as possible.
I was afraid of my heart hurting from the people close to me becoming sacrifices.
In order to kill me, in order to protect me, from now on many more people would be sacrificed, and before long my heart wouldn't hurt as much.
I thought that that was fine.

Because I avoided creating friends that I could relax around, naturally I had nobody of my age around me.
I was different to Raiga.
My butler was desperate to have me quickly make friends of the same age in order to protect myself, and the children of the King Faction nobles were brought to meet me but… I couldn't get into it. I did think that I needed allies, but… I couldn't take action. I didn't have the courage to move, nor did I think I wanted to move.
Because of the suspicion of being betrayed again, and the fear of losing somebody again.
Even if Raiga's followers weren't aiming for my life, they diligently picked on me.
On that day too, I was surrounded by Raiga's followers.

In the inner palace, even when they pushed me, and tried to get on top of me, I didn't even resist.
It was always the same, and after a while, they would probably get tired of it. Each

time, they wouldn't do anything too cruel. If it stayed at the level of children messing about, the guards wouldn't move.
If I endured, for just a little…

But the hit I anticipated didn't come.

"Heyy! Stop thaat!"

Suddenly came a voice from above my head.
At the same time that I heard the voice, the boy that tried to mount me was sent flying.

What descended from the sky was a pink haired girl and a caramel brown haired boy.
I stared wide-eyed at their bizarre entrance.

"Can you stand?"

The boy helped me up.
The girl was holding back Raiga's followers. In spite the fact that there were overwhelmingly more of them.
What she used to protect herself was a carefully created, beautiful barrier magic. I had never seen somebody of that age use that.
The two of them sat me down on the broom, and brought me to the Magic Building. I was overwhelmed from seeing the view from the sky for the first time.
They were children who were beyond expectations in every way, and being with them was fun. It was the first time I felt that way.

I was at a loss about these feelings in my heart that I felt for the first time since I was born.
At the same time, I felt that I want to try talking to them a little, try getting to know them a little.
It had been a long time since I had heard a friendly voice talking to me that energetically. …Even though I should have already decided that I wouldn't get deeply involved with others anymore.
If it was them, would it be okay for them to stay beside me? Would they become the first allies of my age?
My stupid expectations raised it's neck.

A sly person like me thought to use political power to capture them… with my status as the first prince.
The days I spent with them were exciting, and filled my heart with warmth. That's why I had forgotten.

And a regretful incident occurred.
That day, I invited Achille and Camille to come with me to tour the castle town.
It was because I simply thought that it would be more fun with a lot of people.
Along with the guards prepared for me, I headed to the market in high spirits.
…No matter how much I regret it, it still wouldn't be enough. Amongst those guards

was an assassin.

Achille and Camille tried to get me to escape.
Camille prepared a broom with magic, and told me to escape. But I couldn't move.
Wouldn't I lose the two of them? Like the guard who had covered for me in the past…
Thinking that, I became afraid. I couldn't leave there.
In the end, Camille was injured.

With the last of her strength, she killed an assassin, and protected me. Even whilst blood was streaming from her stomach.
The knife that had stabbed her had melted and dropped onto the floor.

"Camille! Camille!"

While trembling, I propped her up.
Achille applied emergency aid with the healing magic he learnt, but it was all he could do to stop the bleeding and treat the burn. As for me, I couldn't use magic at all.
I cursed myself for being useless.
I'm always, always protected by others. Just how many people have to be sacrificed for me before I'm satisfied? I'm… so pathetic.
I was disgusted with myself for being unable to live without sacrificing others. Even though I was supposed to have understood, before I knew it, I had become spoilt from the comfortable environment.
I didn't plan on this happening. As I thought, it would be better if I didn't exist.
The two of them might part from me, but when that happened, I had to resolutely let go of them for their sake, I thought.
Seeing their two injured forms was more painful than I had imagined. As long as they were by my side, the two of them couldn't live peaceful lives.

※

"Royce-sama, Royce-sama~♪"

Camille who was in a good mood was frolicking about me. Even though she had gone through something like that, she followed me around even more.
A cute, but dependable older sisterly or maybe young sisterly… important person to me.
Her good will towards me was open to see, but not even a little amorous, romantic feeling could be see. That's why I could associate with her without putting any distance between us.

"Camille, isn't it bad for you to follow around Royce-sama that much? Like that, Royce-sama can't move about, you know."

Said Achille, nonchalantly parting Camille from me. He isn't conscious of it, but he holds "good will" towards Camille… is what I think.
Up until now, he's been thoroughly looking after her.

I secretly think it would be nice if the two of them paired up with each other.
The only one who can take off Achille's poker face is Camille after all, and the only one who can stop Camille's rampages is Achille after all.

Right now Camille is working at the castle as a "Red" magician, and Achille is working there as an apprentice in things related to the government.
Far from leaving me, the two of them even became apprenticeships in jobs for my future.
I'm no match for these two.

…I felt that it wouldn't do to stay this way.

I have to graduate from holding these feelings of inferiority about my father the king, and about my cousin, and stop wallowing about in feelings of guilt about existing.
So that from now on, I'll be a lord worthy of these two.

12 Years Old – Q of Hearts

"Camille-sama, what will you be wearing to the dance party?"

Aimée suddenly said something incomprehensible to me.

"Dance party…?"

Meaning, that, huh?

"As in, young men and women dancing madly in ecstasy trying to win each other's hearts?"

"No, Camille-sama! Where on earth did you learn something like that?"

Aimée showed her indignation openly, placing her hands on her hips. Because she was bending backwards, a button on the chest portion of her maid outfit seemed like it was about to snap off and go flying.
How strange, in my beloved otome games and novels in my past life, dance parties were that sort of thing, but…

"And so, what about the dance party?"

"You will be attending, will you not? …Have you heard nothing from Marquis-sama?"

"I haven't, but… if it's father, then he's always engrossed with his work so I think he probably forgot to tell me."

The one other person who should have heard from father, our butler Pierre, hasn't contacted me either. Because he's old, though he won't admit it himself, he feels a little senile so he's dodgy.
He's a good old man who is enthusiastic with his job, but it might be about time that it'd be better for him to retire from the frontlines.

"Hahh, Marquis-sama's love for his job is troubling, isn't it? …Even though it's his daughter's dance party debut!"

"It's the same as always… I have learned dancing and manners, so I think it would be fine as long as I ask Achille about the things I don't know in advance."

"Hahhh, each and every time I want to take my hat off to Achille-sama… It'd be nice if he one day he married into the marquis family."

Aimée has a high evaluation of Achille who comes to play on occasion. Not just her, but there are a huge number of his fans among the servants too. You can't make light of Achille's 'surface mode'.

The more he matures, the more polished Achille's smile becomes, and the less fake it looks too… It's already reached a level that I can't see through anymore.

"…No matter what, that would just put Achille in a pitiful position, you know."

I may be saying this myself, but I can't call myself a normal noble's daughter.
I don't mind since I'm like this because I want to be, but I feel sympathy towards any men who marry into this family. Well, I feel sympathy, but I have no intentions of changing the way I roll though…

If it's with his specs, Achille can hunt as many good women as he wants. This isn't bias because I'm a childhood friend; it really seems like that in reality.
To him, it'd be a tragedy to be stuck marrying someone like me.
It's that guy, but I hope he'll be happy.

In the game, Achille was a guy who wanted to ruin me, but if it's now that we're on good terms, as you'd expect, I don't think he'd relentlessly drive me to destruction.
Achille seems to have at least that much affection for me, and I'm filled with love for him.

Isn't my destruction flag getting weaker and weaker?
Having thought that, to me, the Achille right now is a good friend.

※

"Haahh, I'm beat."

On a day a few days after the time I heard about the dance party from Aimée, I finished my "Red" work, and came to the castle to report the details.
Because I left for far away to complete my job, it took nearly a week going there and back. And it was night time right now.

"Welcome back, Camille. Good work with the dragon extermination."

For some reason Achille came out to meet me when I returned to the castle. Certainly I was coming home from a dragon extermination, but…

This time I was left the job of exterminating the dragon that attacked the villages in the frontier one by one, by my "Red" boss. I moved together with a number of other magicians, but the one that found the dragon responsible and finished it off was me.

"Why do you know about it, Achille?"

"It's under my jurisdiction, so there's no way I wouldn't, right? I received the mission complete communication magic too, you know."

Speaking of which, Achille was working in the public order bureau.

I don't really get the difficult stuff, but the intellectual jobs of this kingdom sure transfer a lot, huh. Up until just a while ago, he was supposed to be working in the finance bureau, but…
Even though Achille is a little twelve year old, he's been left a bunch of jobs for proper adults. The monster extermination of a certain region was left to Achille as well, so… tracing things back, it means that I was sent out on the dragon extermination by his instruction, huh.
I don't really care where the requests come from and just focus on my job though, you know?
…It's kind of complicated.

My skill in magic has been noticeably going up, and right now I'm at a level where I can take down high class monsters alone.
But I have no skill in bringing jobs and people together, or giving directions, so I can't be like Achille.
I'm totally fine with that. I like hands on work after all… I'm definitely not jealous of Achille or anything!

"Speaking of which, Camille, you'll be attending the dance party this time, right?"

"Mmn, I'm attending… You too, Achille?"

"Mmn, an invitation arrived for me too, after all. I plan on going."

How reassuring. This is much more comforting than having just father and I attending.
It's a dance party open to princes of foreign countries and whatnot, so both the King Faction and Royal Prince Faction will be attending.
The security is flawless, but if I don't make sure that I don't let Royce-sama out of my sight… And I must carefully observe Royce-sama's dancing form. Royce-sama is growing into a pleasant and kind ikemen.
I'm suddenly filled with enthusiasm.

…And then, leaving aside my delusions of a dancing Royce-sama that I've never seen before, I suddenly felt doubt about something.

"Heyy Achille, why are you in the castle at this hour? Overtime?"

Usually he'd have gone home at an earlier hour.

"Today's a little busy. As for your report, I'll listen to it. After that, let's go home together."

"M-…Mmn."

It seems that he plans on seeing me home, but if he does that, Achille will get home even later…

These last few years, I feel that Achille has suddenly gotten gentler.

The amount of times we meet at the castle hasn't changed, but on days off, he'll help me with my studies, or accompany my shopping.
…In the past he was a calculating child (damned brat), but he's growing in a good direction for a person, right?

There was also the exhaustion from work, so on the carriage home I accidentally began to doze off.
I was considering getting on my broom and flying home, but it might have been the right decision to let Achille drop me off in the carriage. A magician falling asleep at the 'wheel' and falling off her broom… I can't laugh about it.

"You can sleep, you know. Once we arrive, I'll wake you up."

"Mn… But I'd feel bad, you know. Being escorted home, and even falling asleep…"

"I don't mind, so it's fine. You came home from somewhere far away this time, right?"

"Mmn… I saw the ocean, you know. One day I want to go with you, and Royce-sama… too…"

At some point I fell asleep in the rattling and swaying carriage.
I feel like somebody was stroking my hair, but once again my consciousness left me and I stopped being able to think about anything…

In the end, I was fast asleep all the way up until the marquis residence.

12 Years Old – J of Hearts

I think I became interested in Camille fairly quickly after we met.
Had I not, the young me would not have concerned himself with a stranger to that extent.

I gazed at Camille who was sleeping inside the carriage.
Her silky pink hair isn't curled today, probably because of her job.
A small, well-featured face, eyelashes fine like smoke, and lips like cherry blossoms…
No matter from whose perspective, Camille is a beautiful girl. Having reached twelve years old, her beauty has become outstanding, and overwhelms all the other girls.
Were it not for her unfortunate behaviour, there's no doubt that she'd be considerably popular. I have fun watching the disappointing Camille, so it's fine though, you see.
When I stroked her straight hair while she was fast asleep, she suddenly stirred. In surprise, I pulled my hand back, but Camille didn't wake, and immediately her regular sleeping breath could be heard again.

"…Even though she's alone with a man, she's way too relaxed."

I realised my feelings because of what His Highness said.
Up until then, she had been just an eccentric childhood friend to me, but because of His Highness' unnecessary words, that day I became more conscious of Camille than necessary.
Honestly, I didn't want to admit it. Getting wrapped up about a woman was something that a fool did, and I knew how to use the other sex… Even though that's how it should have been…
I got close to Camille because I was interested in the position of marquis. Even though that's how it should have been…

"Why did it turn out like this?"

This isn't how it should have gone…
I was at my wit's end. …But, this alone was something that was purely a matter of emotions, so there was nothing I could do about it.

After realising my own feelings, I was quick to act.
Since I was aiming to marry into the marquis family to begin with, wouldn't it be fine to be positive about this?
And so, under the pretext of making sure Camille was studying right, I frequently showed my face at the marquis' house.
I think I've caught the hearts of the servants… All of them see me favourably. In particular, the maid with the large build, Aimée, even went as far as telling me "Please become the groom!".
…Just according to nerai [tl: nerai means "aim"]

As for the fact that I'm diligently removing the obstacles in my way, Camille hasn't

noticed in the slightest.

※

It was the day of the aforementioned dance party.
It was held in the banquet hall of the castle, and dressed up nobles and foreign guests were gathered there.

“Royce-sama… So wonderful, hahh hahh[/pant pant].”

After going around once and greeting everybody, Camille was glued to His Majesty. Without forgetting to threaten the other nobles’ daughters when His Highness wasn’t watching.
Camille whose breathing was rough as she licked His Highness all over with her gaze, looked like a degenerate no matter how you saw it.

“Huhu… You look very cute too, Camille.”

“Ehehe~, if you praise me that much I’ll get excited and have a nose bleed.”

What Camille, who was in high spirits at being praised, was wearing tonight was a navy blue dress with few puffy parts.
Since it’s Camille, she probably stressed ease of movement in her choice of dress.
The skirts of Déborah and Désirée who were at the other side of the room were super puffy, as though it weren’t already enough.
Once it gets that big, honestly, they’re just blocking the road.

“Ah! Déborah, Désirée!”

Noticing the two of them, Camille waved her hands while she approached the sisters who had turned into walking lanterns.
Mysteriously, those two were on good terms with Camille. It seems they became acquainted once Camille started visiting my house.

“Camille, the dessert that you love is over there, you know.”

“Shall we get some together, Camille?”

“Let’s, let’s~”

After the lively girls had moved away beyond a certain distance, I was called out to from behind, with calculated timing.

“Achille-sama, may we have a dance together?”

Upon turning my head, I found a whole line of young ladies… I’m feeling dizzy.

“Yes, of course.”

I wish they would give me a break, but I can’t just refuse. Among them are some nobles daughters that are higher ranked than I am.

I continually dance around like an idiot… How many people has it been now? After it’s done, shall I take refuge in the break room…?
While I was being fed up, in the corner of my eye I saw a man courting Camille.
To court Camille who’s plastered with magic tattoos as always, what an incredible hero.
Since I’m curious, I’ll take the lead of the dance and move that way.
…Doesn’t Camille’s expression seem kind of stiff?

“Like I said, I’m willing to partner with a woman covered in magic tattoos like you.”

“…”

“Not a single person wants to marry you anyway, right? If you hand over the marquis’ seat to me, I don’t mind making you my wife yanno?”

“…”

“So what do you think?”

“…Ummmm.”

Camille was looking at the man like she had found some strange new organism. The man’s words and behaviour was probably incomprehensible.
I recognise the face of the guy talking to her; he’s the recently upstart baron…’s delinquent second son.
With glittering clothes of bad taste, and a greasy pimpled face, he’s probably around sixteen or seventeen, huh…
Truly a nobody.
From a while ago, he’s been smirking at Camille while appraising her. …It’s incredibly unpleasant.

“I decline! I too have the right to choice, after all. I do not like arrogant men.”

Said Camille, casually replying with cruel words. But, well done.

“What was that!? Even though you’re covered in tattoos, you’re going to refuse my kind offer? If you refuse me, not a single man will approach you for the rest of your life, you know!”

The indignant man grabbed Camille’s arm.
Even like that, Camille is still the daughter of a marquis, though. If you do something violent like that… things will get scary afterwards, you know?

“Soorry to say this even though you love me so much, but please look for somebody elseee.”

Aahh, Camille has started having fun by provoking the man. It looks like the guy’s attitude has woken up the sadist in her.
Déborah and Désirée have been watching the whole thing from a little distance away. Those two enjoy watching others fight, after all.

“Looking down on me!”

The man’s face was bright red, and he tried to twist Camille’s arm, but she didn’t move at all.
And little wonder, since among Camille’s magic tattoos is one that has the effect of automatically defending herself.
Automatic defence, automatic regeneration, high speed strike reinforcement, magic reflection… etc. etc. Right now Camille who’s smeared all over in tattoos is close to invincible.
Only I, who gets shown them each time she gets a new tattoo, knows this.

“Achille-sama…”

The young noble lady who’s my dance partner looks up at me confused. With good timing, the dance’s song ends.

“No, it is nothing…”

I reply with a smile to reassure her, but… If you asked me if that was on my mind, then yes it was.

“Please excuse me for a moment.”

After leaving the ring of dancers, I head towards Camille.

“You damned woman! I’ll freaking send you flying!”

The man grabbed at Camille. It looks like he’s finally run out of patience. It’s something very brave to do to a woman who killed a dragon by herself.
But, because of the power of Camille’s automatic defence, the man couldn’t do a thing to her. Everything was blocked by an invisible barrier.

Having noticed the noise, there were people gathered there and watching. It’s about time that I have to stop this, huh…

“Camille, what are you doing? Looks fun.”

I walked straight into the group of people. Seeing me, she smiled happily.

“Achille! …It seems that this person wants to be my fiancé, but I refused him…”

“My, my…”

Looking from up close, the man looks increasingly of bad taste. All of his fingers are covered in glittering, gaudy rings.

I approached the man, and announced something to him.

“I am sorry, but she’s already taken.”

” “Eh?” ”

“The marquis’ daughter, Camille Rhodolite, is my fiancée.”

“Ehh…?”

Camille blinked her eyes.

“That’s how it is, so please excuse us.”

I pulled her by the arm, and immediately left the scene.
The man was still making a fuss, but the people in charge of security had an eye on him and dragged him away somewhere.
At this rate we’d catch the attention of others in the hall, so bringing Camille along, I headed to one of the break rooms prepared for today for a rest.

Camille and I entered the small-ish room. In the corner of the room was a white sofa and table prepared.
For now, I had her sit down, and took the seat beside her.

“Achille… What’s going on what why?”

While tilting her head blankly, Camille asked about my earlier words.

“It was an excuse to shut him up, you know? But I sure said it in front of a huge group of people huh… I wonder what will happen.”

Of course, I declared it in front of a crowd on purpose.

Camille lost her words. It seems like the composure she had while dealing with that baron’s second son has been blown off somewhere.

“Achille… You… At this rate, isn’t it possible that you’ll end up my fiancé? This isn’t the time to be acting so carefree, you know!”

It seems like she’s truly worried about me. But, it’s misdirected.

“I don’t really mind, even so.”

“That’s no good! If it’s you Achille, you can aim for any number of better girls, so you mustn’t settle for me!”

“Eh…?”

“I’ll, try talking to father[/otousama] about this! Don’t worry, it’ll be alright, okay!?”

After making some sort of determined expression, Camille strongly grasped my hand.

…Huh?[Are?]

14 Years Old – Q of Hearts

I worked hard today too! I collapsed onto the sofa in the break room in the Magic Building.
I finished the job and returned just now.
Today's job, "exterminate the kraken that have been appearing in large quantities" was surprisingly backbreaking work.
The magicians that worked with me are probably resting by themselves as well.
Before I start the next job, shall I take a breather?
As soon as I closed my eyes, sleep came calling.

"Oi."

In my dreams, it feels like somebody is calling out to me.
…I can kind of hear something, but I'll ignore it. I'm exhausted.

"Oi, get up."

So noisy. If you tell order somebody around so arrogantly, won't people just rebel?

"I'm telling you to get up."

The owner of the voice began to kick the sofa I was lying on.
I can't sleep like this.

"Ahh, geez!"

I got up in irritation. Because my sleep was disturbed, my mood has taken a dive.

Somebody was looking down on me from right beside me, so I turned my eyes that way. …How troubling.

"Why are you in the Magic Building…?"

The owner of the voice was somebody who shouldn't have appeared here; the royal prince's son, Raiga Transbaal. It's been a while since we've met.

"Have you seen Mei"

"I haven't seen her today, but I just got back to the castle, so… What's happening with Mei-chan"

"She's gone missing… Even though she's never been late to afternoon tea before!"

It seems that each day, Raiga takes a break during the afternoon and has tea with Mei. Him having tea is kinda mismatched.

“But… can you really call just that, ‘going missing’?”

Raiga’s anxiety isn’t normal. When it comes to Mei, he always loses his composure.
Enough that he stepped foot into the Magic building that had been turned into a King Faction stronghold. …I’m technically part of the King Faction too, though, you knoww?

“Umm, perhaps waiting a little for Mei-chan…”

“Look for her.”

“Pardon?”

“Look for her with your magic. …You can do it, right?”

Asking for the ridiculous, this guy.
I don’t think that I can’t do it, but… when I get ordered with an arrogant attitude like this, you knoww…

“Please listen carefully. If I do it once, from now on I’ll always be able to find Mei-chan’s whereabouts, you know?”

To begin with, detection magic is a magic that follows the waves of the target’s mana, and if you remember their waves once, you’ll always be able to find those waves from then on.

“…”

“If you don’t mind somebody of the King Faction like me being able to do that, I’m fine with cooperating though.”

Raiga’s face that was cold to begin with became even more dreadful.
The number of magicians that can use highly accurate detection magic is limited, so he probably has his own troubles too.

“…You can do the searching, right?”

“If I have Mei-chan’s belongings, then searching for her is possible, you know? … From now and always.”

Raiga was thinking about something for a little while, but it seems that he had resolved himself.
He held out something fluttery before me.

“It’s Mei’s handkerchief. …Can you find her with this?”

Why is Raiga walking around with Mei’s handkerchief on his person? Contrary to his appearance, this guy is…

Won't I become unable to look at him the same way because of this?
After clearing my throat to hide my inner turmoil, I concentrated.

"Well then, I shall be borrowing the handkerchief then."

After holding the handkerchief in my hand, I activated the search magic. This, is actually supposed to be magic used for searching for monsters, huh.
The handkerchief disappeared, and a ball of light appeared in the air.

"Well then, let's go, Raiga-sama. If we follow after the light, we'll reach Mei-chan."

Raiga obediently followed me.

※

The ball of light went inside a large building in a courtyard of the royal palace.

"It's locked, isn't it?"

"Open it with your magic."

"…Umm, you see, the locks in the royal palace have various magic placed on them, you see, and are made so that outsiders can't open them."

"I know that, so just open it."

What are you going to do if I get arrested for lock breaking!? Unlike Royce-sama, this guy is a tyrant, huh!
I really can't understand a heroine that could fall in love with such a guy. …Let's leave aside the fact that through the heroine I was completely in a romance with Raiga in the game.

…But still, why does he know that I can open the lock? Even though all of the doors in the castle are made so that they can't normally be opened by magicians.
Was I seen that time, when I was locked in a knight's changing room that reeked of men by one of Royce-sama's fans and undid the lock by myself to escape…? In that case, don't just watch, but help me!!

"If anything happens, please take responsibility, Raiga-samaa."

I filled the keyhole with magic, and forcefully opened the lock.
At the same time that I opened the lock, Raiga opened the door and rushed inside, and I followed after him as well.

"Mei!"

"Mei-chaaaaan"

Tools for maintaining the courtyard, flower seeds, soil… a dusty smell wafted about the room.

“Ra…iga…sama?”

After hearing a weak voice from beyond the pile of stacked manure, I frantically turned that way, and found Mei squatting on the ground. For some reason her clothing was tattered, and she was wounded here and there too.

“Mei…”

Raiga ran over the Mei, and embraced her.

“Raiga-samaa… Wahhhh”

“What’s wrong? What happened?”

“That’s…”

Looking like it was difficult to say, Mei averted her eyes.

“Who did this? Making you go through this… Unforgivable!”

“It’s fine, Raiga-sama… I was wrong.”

The two of them were completely in their own world. Sure is master and servant love, huh~

“As if it’s fine! Even though my lover was made to suffer like this, I’m supposed to stay quiet!?”

Oh my, I feel like I heard Raiga say something shocking just now. “Lover” as in… It couldn’t be.

“Ummmm… Are you two going out with each other?”

“What, you’re still here?”

A piss off! This guy is seriously a piss off! Who do you think you have to thank for getting all the way here!?

“Of course I am. Hurry up and hand Mei-chan over here. I’ll heal her wounds.”

Raiga flusteredly stopped hugging Mei.

“Oneesama!”

Meichan sure has grown, huh. Going from “Oneechan” to “Oneesama”.

“Yes, yes, stay still, Mei-chan.”

While I was healing Mei, she told me about her relationship with Raiga.

“About your question just now… Raiga-sama and I, have, umm, become lovers.”

“…I-, I see~[/H-, heehh]”

“Kai was angry for some reason, and went to the castle just now…”

“…I see.”

Has it become some strange incident?

Raiga and Mei are lovers, and Kai went to the castle. It’s all stuff that didn’t happen in the game.
Developments different to the game have been appearing with these guys too.
If we continue like this, we might be able to avoid the risk of coup d’état to Royce-sama. I can’t be careless, though…
As long as Raiga and Mei are dating, the heroine probably won’t end up with Raiga.

“And so, why did you end up like this, Mei?”

It seems that Raiga hadn’t forgotten about his question from earlier. He once again questioned Mei.

“That’s… Because I’m not suitable for Raiga-sama… Because despite being a lowly servant, I took the position of Raiga-sama’s lover…”

“Who said that!?”

“Raiga-sama, if you start bellowing like that, Mei-chan will get scared. Please calm down.”

What a helpless guy, geez. He wasn’t such a passionate guy in the game though, huhh.

“Mei-chan, if it’s difficult to say then you don’t have to, but… would it be okay to hear what happened?”

I can sort of guess, but I’m not positively sure, so…

“It’s okay, Oneesama… Um, you see, because it was tea time, I was heading to Raiga-sama’s room, and then I was surrounded by the daughters of the Royal Prince Faction, and was brought here to be locked in.”

Just like I thought, huh. The actions of nobles' daughters who fall in love with people of influence stick to one pattern, huh. Locker rooms that reek of sweat, and storage rooms with piles of manure, and… even the places they choose to lock you up in aren't creative at all, huh.

"Did those women give you those wounds?" [Raiga]

"…It was the servants that served them, and they watched and laughed."

Ahh, I can sort of picture it. Not wanting to dirty their own hands, huh… A bunch of women with bad hobbies.
The Mei before me is unlike the Mei of the game, and has a personality unrelated to combat. Without any means to defend herself, she's a good target.
To lock up such a good girl, it's unforgivable!
Raiga is also making a vicious smile behind Mei's back. Ah. This guy is definitely planning on some kind of revenge.
…Meaning that I won't get a chance to appear, huh. Would I get in the way instead?

"Sorry, Mei. This is because I was careless."

"Raiga-sama… No way, you weren't wrong, Raiga-samaa."

The two of them began falling into their own little world again. There's nothing more uncomfortable than this.
For that Mei to get close to Raiga, who would've thought… Even though it was the heartwarming image of a young girl, and an overprotective older sister…

The two of them have reached that age, huh.
Leaving the two of them who were getting excited in various senses, I quietly departed from that place.

On another day, I got a wonderful book called『Encyclopaedia of the Garnet Nation's Legendary Magics』as a thank you from Raiga.
Guess there's no choice. Shall I forget about the numerous times he was rude to me?

15 Years Old – Q of Hearts

"Congratulations, Camille-samaa!"

"Gyah-!"

Upon coming home after work, I was hugged by Aimée.
Hurtss, heavyy… getting crushed.

"Did something happen? It shouldn't be my birthday yet."

Towards I, who was creating some distance in a panic, Aimée neared me while twisting her body back and forth.

"What are you saying…? Is it not obviously about your engagement being decided?"

"Engagement?"

"It couldn't be! Have you failed to hear from Marquis-sama again?"

Getting contacted through my father again? It would've been fine just to tell me personally anyway, but…
Our butler Pierre retired last year, and his son took his place, but how should I say this…? His son is incompetent.
He completely forgot to contact me. If it gets too bad, I plan on firing him.

"Hey, who am I getting engaged to?"

"Uhuhuhuhuu, that is… you know?"

Instead of acting all dramatic, hurry up and tell me.
While I pressed my hand against my anxiously beating heart, I glared at Aimée.

"It's Achille."

A third person suddenly butted into our conversation.
Reacting to that voice, Aimée turned around.

"My, welcome home, Marquis-sama. You are early today, aren't you?"

At the entrance to the house stood father.

"Otousama… Just now, what did you?"

"Like I said, Achille has been decided as your fiancé."

"…!"

Why? After that one incident at the dance party, didn't I thoroughly ask father, "Please protect Achille from falling into the disgrace of being my fiancé."?
And yet, why did Achille end up engaged to someone like me!?

"Otousama! I remember asking you to free Achille from this…"

"But… the Jade family formally applied for it, you know? Soleil was on board with it too."

"Heh…?"

"And I've judged too that Soleil's son is the better choice. There was another, more annoying, request, you see."

It seems that without my knowing, various things have been progressing.

※

"I am truly very sorryy!"

I had directed a sliding dogeza[1] at Achille, and Royce-sama was overlooking me in curiosity.
As expected of the carpet in Royce-sama's room! Even though I was sliding, it didn't hurt!

"…Camille, did you do something to Achille?"

Royce-sama, a woman is a being with many secrets, you know.

"Ahh, could this be about the engagement?"

"Yeah!"

Damn Achille, what a thing to admit in front of Royce-sama!
…Wait, or is it my fault for not choosing the time and place properly?

"There's nothing to apologise about, you know. I don't mind, after all."

"Buttt… Because of me, your shining future has been crushed, Achille!"

"Why did you come to that conclusion…?"

Achille is scratching his head, looking troubled.
Huh? For some reason Royce-sama is looking downwards, trembling.

“-kuku… Wouldn’t it be better for you two to have a proper chat about this? …P-pfft-”

At Royce-sama’s suggestion, Achille and I decided to talk about it properly. Royce-sama kindly left.

Having said that though, what’s there to talk about after all this time? What’s happening this time is all because of my blunder.
While telling him that it would be alright, it ended up like this… Aahh, I’m depressed.

“Achille… I’m really so sorry.”

“…Hahh.”

He sighed! Even though I know I’m in the wrong, it still hurts, huh.

“I’m not angry. Raise your head?”

When I raised my head like I was told, I found Achille’s face closer than expected.

“Umm… Achille?”

His eyelashes sure are long. A nose that runs beautifully down his face, and well-shaped lips… He had ikemen elements to begin with, but he sure grew up well too, huh.

I was staring at Achille, but he didn’t show any signs of moving away.

“About being your fiancé, Camille… I’m not against it.”

“It’s fine, it’s fine, you don’t have to worry about me. You’re kind, Achille.”

For some reason he sighed again.

“The one who should be apologising is me… Listen, Camille.”

He gazed at me unexpectedly seriously, so I became bewildered.

“The one who proposed for an engagement this time, was me.”

“You did, Achille? I-, It couldn’t be that because the rumours about the time at the dance party spread uncontrollably, you gave up on finding a good bride? What do I do…?”

“Won’t you calm down?”

Achille placed both his hands on my shoulders, after I stood up vigorously.

“But… this is terrible!”

I was panicked.
A huge problem that would mess about with Achille's life, at this rate, won't getting engaged to me be the worst disgrace in Achille's lifetime?

"Since that time at the dance party, I've always wanted to become your husband, Camille. It seems like you're misunderstanding something, but this is what I want, Camille."

"Achille…?"

…Speaking of which, Achille was an ambitious person.
As he matured, he's gotten better at hiding that, but his true self hasn't changed.
If he marries me, he'll become the next marquis in every meaning.
Is that why Achille decided to become my fiancé and compromised…? Thinking like that, it makes sense.

"I've got it, Achille. If you're fine with someone like me as a fiancée… I'll be in your care."

"Camille…"

Achille is gazing at me painfully at point blank. What's wrong?
Huh, it seems like Achille's face is getting closer, and closer…?

Ah, that's it!
I suddenly remembered a most important issue. I have to make sure I say this!

"Achille! …Even if you're engaged to me, if you find somebody you like, you can make them your mistress, okay? I'm open-minded, you see, so as long as you properly do your job as the marquis, I don't mind you doing that kind of thing!"

Huh? His face which is now point blank just stiffened… I feel.
I guess saying 'mistress' right to his face was bad, huh. Maybe he's embarrassed.
But, if Achille became strangely considerate of me, and became unable to pursue his own romances, it'd be pitiful so…

I really don't want this engagement with me to give him painful feelings, you know? Achille is an important friend after all.

"Anyway, Achille, I have work now so see you."

"Wa-… Camille!"

It seems that Achille has rebooted from his freeze. Thank goodness.
If he says that he wants to be engaged to me, then that's fine too, right?
I have no right to say anything more than this. …I feel relieved.

“Anyway, see you later~”

I enlarged the quill, and took off from Royce-sama’s window towards the Magic Building.

※

…Or so I thought, but Achille was grabbing my ankle.

“Uwah-, dangerous!”

“We’re not done talking yet, you know…”

Achille is in a bad mood for some reason.

“Sorry, Achille, but work is-”

“Your job starts in the evening today, right? It’s still daytime, so you’re still free for three hours, right?”

This guyyy, why does he know my shifts at work? Even though I thought I’d be able to indulge in laziness until my next job!
Because I had no choice, I landed in the room. Aah, my hours of sleep are disappearing…

The very moment I landed, Achille caught my arm. …Is it to prevent me from escaping?
Because we’ve known each other for a long time, he’s a man that knows me quite well.

“Not done talking, you say? Was there something else to talk about? If it’s about the number of mistresses you can have, I’m not restraining you, you know? If you have too many it’ll become troublesome, but if it’s two or three, then.”

I’m sorry about saying that he can’t have a huge number of them, but we have our financial circumstances too.
If it uses too much money, I’ll be troubled.

“You can stop talking about mistresses, you know? I’m not going to have any, after all.”

Not having any? I wonder if it’s a good idea to declare that now. He might want to make some later, after all.

“I’m fine with you, Camille. I’m fine with just you.”

“Geeez, this againnn.”

Honestly, this guy sure thinks of his friends, huh! Still being worried about me after all that time.

“You won’t believe me anyway, right? That’s fine… I’m going to prove it from now on, after all.”

“Prove?”

Achille gave a slight smile, and for some reason my back ran cold.
Huh…? Did I, say something bad?

“Yeah… Prepared?”

He raised the arm that he was holding, and gave the back of my hand, one light and gentle kiss.

Notes

1. Sliding dogeza on YouTube

16 Years Old – Q of Hearts

"Oh no!"

I'm in my room, glaring at my workbook.
It's study practice for the entrance exam to the Royal Magic Academy.
The entrance exams to the Magic Academy include tests for both magic and general education.

If it's magic knowledge or practical skills then I'm set, but that isn't the case for general education. Right now, I'm bad at studies.
I didn't notice until I enrolled for the exam, but all the characters in the games, the mob characters included, are actually all extremely gifted.

"Camille-sama, for this question, you use the equation from before, you know."

Today, Achille is playing the part of my private tutor. He's perfect for both magic and general studies.
He's good at explaining things, so I'm grateful that I can ask him for help like this.

"I'm done forr… There's only a month left, after all."

"Come on, it's only a little more. Aren't you going to enjoy your school life with Royce-sama? It's a boarding school system, so if you fail the exam you won't be able to meet Royce-sama for a while, you know?"

"I don't want that!"

"Then you'll solve this question, right? If you can do that, I'll take you to a street cafe that just opened."

"I'll do my best!"

Achille is incredibly good at using the carrot and the stick technique. He completely understands how to get me to bite.

Ever since I formally became his fiancée, Achille has been coming to our house even more than before.
Aimée and all the other servants welcome him. He's extremely popular with the servants.

I've been desperately studying.
In this world, the things I studied in my old world are almost completely useless.
The official language of this world is Japanese, but there are no Japanese classics, Chinese classics, or English to study. The history is different to my old world too, so I had to memorise it from scratch.

And English which I hated so much! Even though I suffered so much studying it in my old world, for it all to have been meaningless is just too cruel.
A little bit of the modern language and science curriculums just managed to overlap.

"…Correct."

Achille told me well done, as he pat my head. This is kinda, embarassing, huh.
It feels like he's been touching me more recently.

"The street cafe…"

"All right, all right."

The two of us left the room for a bit, and quickly changed into clothing for going incognito.

※

We finished getting ready without a hitch, and left the garden of the estate.

Achille enlargened the quill he produced from his pocket, and sat me down in front. He can use broom magic just like me.
Achille is talented, so he immediately managed to learn the new magic that I taught him.
It was worth teaching him, but for him to be good at both magic and studies is a little mortifying.

"It's fine, I'll just take out a broom too."

However, Achille ignored my words and sat down behind me.

"Achille-! Like I said, I'd bring out… I can ride it myselff."

"Come on now, we're taking off. Hold on, okay?"

What's up with that?
It feels like the distance between us has shortened somehow.

My resistance was futile, and Achille took off with me sitting in front.

"You're so slender, Camille, and you smell nice."

"…You should just save those words for those noble daughter fans of yours, or something."

Ever since that day when Achille told me that he wanted to be my fiancé, he's occasionally created this kind of sweet mood.

I wonder if this is his “proof” or whatever.
Honestly speaking, I don’t know what to do.

※

Finally, the day of the entrance exam has come.
It was packed enough that it made you wonder if there were really this many people of your age in the world, and the school grounds were a mess of people. The exams can be taken by anybody, so there might be a lot of people who come to take it for the hell of it.

Unfortunately, I’m in a different examination room to both Achille and Royce-sama. It seems that Mei, and while I’m thinking about her, Raiga as well, aren’t in my classroom either.
I’m feeling just a little discouraged.

“No, it’s alright. After all, I’ve been studying all for this day.”

If I fail now, I won’t be able to show my face in front of the tutors who have looked after me, or Achille either.
Not only that, of all things I wouldn’t be able to meet with Royce-sama! How unbearable!
If something happened to Royce-sama while I wasn’t there, it wouldn’t be enough even if I regretted it.

I steeled myself, and opened the door to the examination room.

“Buhe-”

Ouch…
The moment I opened the door, somebody’s arm smacked me right in the face.
For the sake of protecting against cheating, everyone took off their automatic magic today.
Because of that, right now I’m obviously not using automatic defence magic.
Even my magic tattoos are completely gone today, you know~?

I could feel a seemingly expensive cloth up against the place on my face that was hit.
Because the cloth served as a buffer, it seemed that I suffered less dmg than expected.

“Sorry, are you okay?”

A tall man with long copper hair, and foreign looking accessories jingling about was looking down at me with a troubled expression.

“I’m fine. I should be saying sorry for bumping into you.”

I immediately began heading to the table I was assigned, but the man I bumped into earlier called out to me.

“Hang onnn, could you possible be… The noble daughter of Marquis Rhodolite?”

“Eh…”

“It really is youu. You don’t have any tattoos today, so I didn’t recognise you.”

My tattoos are already something like a trademark of mine. There are almost no women with tattoos, so I guess it can’t be helped though.
But still, just who is this guy…? I can’t remember, but was there someone this gaudy around me?

Probably because my expression gave me away, the man named himself.

“I’m Tria Topageria… We haven’t seen each other since the dance party, huh~”

“Ahhh…!”

Tria Topageria is the second prince of the neighbouring nation, and in the game he was the K of Diamonds.
Speaking of which, I feel like I recall his older brother, the first prince, bringing him along to the dance party as well.
Because he was carriage-sick, he was laying down and we shouldn’t have had a chance to meet, though.

“Today is the first time we’ve spoken directly to each other, huhh~”

He said with a smile, which was really too unmatched with his in-game character.

The in-game Tria had short, cropped hair, and was muscled… he wasn’t dressed this jingle-jangly, and he wasn’t this weak-looking either, and also he was a super womanising character.

The route for him followed the template of “because his way of thinking was a stereotypical royal, and moreover because he had always wanted to defeat his brother, the first prince, and take the crown from him, during the period that the heroine pointed this out to him, they fell in love”.

The Tria in front of me has for some reason turned into a gaudy man with long hair, but…
Just what the heck happened?

“Umm, I apologise for failing to greet you at the party, and…”

“You don’t have to worry about formalities, you know! We might become classmates after this, right!? And also, on the day of the dance party, I was carriage-sick and

throwing up all over the place, so I wasn't in any condition to greet people, yanno?"

"I… see."

"Ah-! But I felt better near the end, you see, and I went to have a look at the party from the corner of the hall, but… Your magic was suuuper amazing, you know? I was moved!"

It seems like he saw the back and forth with that good-for-nothing son from that baron's family.

"Heyhey, how'd you do that magic? I haven't seen that magic in my country, but it was automagic, right?"

"Yeah, that was the magic tattoos'…"

. .

"Umm, -cough cough-… Everybody who is taking the exam, please take a seat. I repeat, everybody who is taking the exam—— …"

It seems like the exam supervisor has arrived in the room.

Cutting off our conversation, the two of us sat down.
Tria's sitting two seats diagonally in front of me, but he's been turning around occasionally and winking at me …What's up with that?

Via the supervisor's magic, the papers and stationary for the general education written exam appeared on our desks.

"Well then, you may begin."

The middle-aged supervisor's voice rang out throughout the room.

Notes

1. *"Tria Topageria"*
   tria as in "**TRY A** banana",
   topageria as in "**TOPA**z was found in al**GERIA**"

16 Years Old – J of Hearts

I wonder if Camille is alright…
Even though I was taking the exam, I couldn't help but be anxious about whether Camille could solve the problems.
Once it comes to exercises, even without magic tattoos, she's likely to automatically short-circuit.
She did study that much though, so I'd like her to be rewarded for it.

As for me, I had room to relax, so I ended up finishing all the questions before the exam even ended. I have nothing to do.
I spotted Mei Zakro in the same examination room. Raiger Transbaal is taking the exam for this school, so she's applied as well, I guess.
Last year, they also became formally engaged.
Raiger's father, the Royal Prince, seemed to be dissatisfied, but I heard that Raiger pressed past it.
Perhaps because he's hit the rebellious age, but Raiger's become a lot less obedient to the Royal Prince than in the past. To us, that's something to be thankful for.
Kai Zakro has disappeared, but there are rumours of him returning to his family's barony, or of him studying abroad.

"With this, the exam is over."

In sync with the exam supervisor's voice, the exam papers disappeared from our desks.
Together with the noise of chatter, the examinees rose from their chairs. I left my seat at the same time too.
Guess I'll go pick up His Highness and Camille. For now, I sent a magic message that read "I'm coming to meet you".

※

"Your Highness!"

"Ahh, Achille."

Having received my message, His Highness appeared at the spot I specified.
However, he was already surrounded by a number of women. As usual, what incredible popularity.
Right now, there's no Camille to restrain them.

"Are you going to meet up with Camille?"

"Yes."

“She was in a place a little bit away, wasn’t she? Let’s go.”

His Highness and I were headed to the building Camille was in, but because of the female students in the way, we aren’t making much progress.
It goes without saying that the usual noble daughters are here, but right now there are noble daughters from other countries and the daughters of wealthy families, and to top it off, there are even commoner girls surrounding us, watching from a distance.
I knew that it would end up like this, but Camille actually plays a great role, huh.
When she’s around, His Highness and I don’t get followed about by women.

“Your Highness, can we break through?”

“Mn, no worries.”

We brought out small quills, and used the magic Camille taught us to enlargen them.
With this magic, as long as it resembles the form of a broom, anything will do, but lately it’s often been the portable quill pens.
His Highness and I turned the quill pens sideways and mounted them, and then floated into the sky. As expected, the women didn’t go as far as chasing us up here.
The women were noisily squealing something or other, but I ignored them and we headed towards Camille.
A little earlier, I sent a communication spell to Camille that specified where we would meet.

※

Close to where Camille took her exam were a lot of applicants crowded about.
The designated meet-up point in particular was congested.

“I wonder if it was a miss, choosing this place… I didn’t think it’d be this crowded.”

“That’s quite rare for you, huh, Achille.”

Within a terribly large crowd, I suddenly caught eye of Camille. Her pink coloured hair is rare, so it stands out.
Camille who was standing in the crowd was… or I should say, it feels like with Camille as the centre, a crowd formed.
Camille was standing dead centre of the crowd, with a lost expression.
A number of men were calling out to her… Which reminds me, she isn’t wearing her magic tattoos today!

She said a number of times that it was “so that I don’t get falsely accused of cheating”, and appeared at the exam with all of her magic tattoos erased.
No matter how you look at it, right now she’s just a normal bishoujo. This is bad.

I impatiently tried to get to her side, broom and all, but before I did, the crowd parted.

“I wonder what’s going on.”

His Highness who was next to me, looked on quite curiously.

“That’s…”

“Your Highness, do you know that man?”

“Mmn, it’s the second prince of the neighbouring country.”

“…! Topageria’s?”

The second prince of Topageria passed through the crowd where they parted, and stood by Camille.
They seem to be speaking friendlily.
I felt anxiety at the scene before me.
Camille might not know, but father once said “A suggestion for Camille-sama’s hand in marriage came from the neighbouring country.”.
That was one of the reasons that father and I rushed the engagement.
The person who sent it was…

“Ah! Royce-sama~ Achille~”

It seems that Camille has noticed us. She’s waving.

“Byee then, Tria-sama. It’d be great if we both passed, huh!”

Camille took out a quill just like ours, and mounted it with familiar movements.
She’s flying towards us.

“So you two flew here.”

“Yeah… The women were chasing us quite terribly, so we escaped and came here.”

“Everyone sure is energetic, huh~ Even though it’s right after an exam… by the way, Camille, you were speaking to the second prince of the neighbouring nation just now, right? Do you know him?”

Your Highness, nice question.

“Rather than ‘know him’, we just got to know each other today. We were in the same room.”

“Have you gotten friendly?”

“Yes, it seems that he has an interest in magic.”

Hmm~? Friendly…

Up until now, I've been relieved somewhere in my heart because there weren't any men interested in Camille.
And just how was that? The moment she takes off her tattoos, men come swarming…
Even though you lot haven't taken any notice of her up until now.

And the prince of Topageria.
Even though an engagement between him and Camille shouldn't be up for discussion anymore…

Because they discussed engagements with other noble daughters as well, I underestimated his interest in Camille.

This is bad. Being royalty should be foul play…

16 Years Old – K of Hearts

Today is the day of the Royal Magic Academy magic exam.
At this school, a pass is determined by the cumulative scores of the general education exam and the magic exam.
The other day, we had the general exam, and I was shocked at the incredible amount of people.
'It'd be great if I passed, but…' Or so I began to worry.
I mean, for a prince to fail the exam, it would be much too lame, you know?

Achille will probably pass without a problem.
Camille… I'm a little worried about her general section.

The contents of this time's exam is extremely simple.
You destroy a sturdy target provided by a teacher, there's a measurement of your magic power, and finally there are various challenges set for you.
Because there are a great number of people, we take the exams in groups of twenty, but upon checking which group I ended up in on the magic noticeboard, due to some good luck I was allotted to the same group as Camille.

"Royce-sama~"

While I waited at the gathering place for our group, Camille ran over with sparkling eyes.

"Camille, we're in the same group, huh."

"Yes! It seems that the first exam will be held on the field grounds, you know? Let's go."

A continuation from the day of the general exam, Camille has no tattoos today, which is a very fresh look.
Looking at her like this, she's extremely cute. Achille probably can't relax out of nervousness.

Because Camille and I are moving together, there are no women obstructing our path like the day of the general education exam.
Camille as well, because I'm here, isn't being surrounded by men either.

We were headed to a large field in the middle of the academy.
On the lawn in the middle was the first group of students.
Surrounding, were spectator seats, and students waiting for their turn were sitting there.

"We're the eighth group, huh."

“Yes, that’s right! Incidentally, Achille is the second group, so… he might be waiting down here, huh?”

While we were speaking, the first group began their exam.
When the examiner used magic to bring up a rectangular target, the people in the spectator seats began watching the exam seriously.
In front of each student floated a hard-looking stone slab target.
The exam involved accurately breaking your target, without getting any of the other targets involved.
The slates of stone look hard, and not so easily broken.
People who managed to break the stone, people who didn’t manage to scratch it at all, people who fired their magic in the wrong direction…
The first exam finished with a lot of people still unable to break their stones.

Next was the second group with Achille.
High-pitched screams rose from the spectator seats. Even though he’s engaged to Camille… Achille has it rough too, huh.

Achille skilfully broke apart a slab like the ones from earlier. Once again, high-pitched screams rose around us.

After that, the exams continued… Finally, it’s our turn.

“Royce-sama! It’ll be okay!”

Camille who noticed my nervousness, encouraged me.[1]

“After all, with your power, Royce-sama, you’ll be able to reliably break that rock slab.”

It seems that she accurately grasped the strength of those magically produced rock slabs and my magic power.

“…Your words are very reassuring.”

It’s too reassuring.
When it comes to magic, I trust in Camille’s words more than anything else.
With her skill in magic alone, despite being only sixteen, she climbed to quite a high position within “Red”.

In time with the examiner’s signal, slates of stone appeared before Camille and I.

“Royce-sama, just watch~”

Camille who was next to me winked, and at the same time her stone slab was pulverised without a trace.
A commotion ran through the spectator seats… but she didn’t pay it any attention.

She turned to me with a gaze that said “Praise me, praise me.”

“…I see. There’s still the stone powder left. Shall I burn it away?”

“It’s fine, that’s plenty. I can really see that you’ve been trying your best, Camille. As a candidate for my guard, there’s no complaints to say about your skill.”

So that Camille doesn’t do anything unnecessary, it’s my job to stop her. Right now Achille isn’t here, so I have to do it properly.

“Really? I’ll definitely become an excellent guard, okay!?”

With a happy expression on her face, she gave a fist pump… Because of Camille, my nervousness about the exam has disappeared.

When I calmed down and faced the target, I gathered mana around the target and made it explode.
With one shot, it cracked, and then it very quickly flew off in four directions.
Thanks to the magic cast on the area, the flying pieces of stone didn’t hit any other students.

“It’s just like you said, huh, Camille. It broke.”

When I said that, she looked incredibly glad and smiled. Probably startled by that smile of hers, the men around us were entranced by her.
Some of them shot off their magic in various directions, or hit themselves with magic instead of the targets… Even though it’s an examination, they sure lack concentration, huh…

Up until now, Camille hasn’t concerned herself with the gazes of the opposite sex.
She only knew of boys sidling up to her in their aim for the seat of the next marquis during tea parties while she was young, and of men who looked down on her from a distance due to her tattoos.
That’s why she didn’t notice at all, the commotion she caused amongst the men. It’s fine that she doesn’t notice their gazes, but I wish she would just hurry up and notice Achille’s feelings already… Achille’s also in the wrong for not frankly telling her his feelings though, huh.
After we finished the target-destruction exam, we headed to the examination ground for the magic power measurement.

However, at our destination, the exam was temporarily suspended.
The other students were making a fuss.

“Oi, have you heard? It seems that in the group before ours, there was someone who broke the measurement item.”

“Serious…? They didn’t get disqualified?”

“Nah, the examiner said that it broke because their magic power was too great, and it couldn’t be measured.”

It seems that there’s an incredible examinee.
Camille also has strong magic power, but even she isn’t strong enough that she’d destroy the measurement item.
I looked towards her, and found that for some reason, her eyebrows were knit in thought. It’s rare that Camille makes such a serious face.

In the end, the magic power measurement started again a little while after that, and we finished the final exam without a problem.

But still, there are still heaps of incredible people in this world, huhh.

Notes

1. *“Camille who noticed my nervousness, encouraged me.”*
   is actually just *“spoke to me”*, but 話しかけてくれた seems grateful enough, so yeah

2. Might be a bit late to mention, but the prince is relatively soft spoken. Uh, also he uses ‘*boku*（僕）’. Achille uses ‘*ore*（俺）(at least in his monologues)’.

3. Also funny that Royce thinks her dullness is because of her lack of experience with men. She’s been to high school before, and her monologues show that she clearly has experience. It’s clear to us that she didn’t notice them, simply because she’s just a straight up legit 100% idiot sometimes, lol.

4. Also, hehe. Enter the heroine. I’d be happy as long as she was even half as nice as Wakaba-chan.

Author's Memo (Parallel wolrd in reality)

Author's note : A summary of the characters that will appear in the Academy Chapter.

Hearts Faction

K of Hearts (Royce Garnet)

A popular oujisama whose main weakness was kindness, but has grown.
Lately his peeping skills have improved.

Q of Hearts (Camille Rhodolite) ♡Protagonist

A girl who loves magic. As a woman, is a no-good in various ways.
Is covered from head to toe in magic tattoos of her own work.

J of Hearts (Achille Jade)

A prodigy who can do anything skilfully, but has a relatively mercenary personality.
Has not sealed the deal on various important things.

Diamonds Faction

K of Diamonds (Tria Topageria)

The flashy second prince of the neighbouring nation.
Because he's a person who acts on his emotion without thinking ahead, his subordinates call him "Baka-sama".

Q of Diamonds (Beatrix Tapas)

The crossdressing earl's daughter of the neighbouring nation.
Is popular amongst women. More popular than her lord, the prince.

J of Diamonds (?)

Absent.
Family is rich.

Spades Faction

K of Spades (Raiger Transbaal)

The only son of the King's younger brother, and is a little bit egocentric and wilful.
He used to do exactly as his father wanted, but has lately been opposing him.

Q of Spades (Mei Zakro)

Raiger's maid, and fiancée.
In a way, she has the most heroine-like personality.

J of Spades (Kai Zakro)

Whereabouts unknown.
Is close with Mei.

Others

Charles Rhodolite (Marquis Rhodolite)

Q of Heart's father.
Is a workaholic who loves magic like his daughter does.

Aimée Afriat

The head maid of the Rhodolite family.
Strongest lady-in-waiting-sama.

Soleil Jade (Viscount Jade)

J of Heart's father, and Charles' subordinate.

The sisters, Déborah & Désirée

J of Heart's half-sisters of a different mother.
Friends of Q of Hearts.

Heroine (Frau Monier)

Objective unknown.
Possesses incredible magic power.
Wants reimbursement for the clothes that became a sacrifice due to her mingling with the Q of Hearts.

Credits

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